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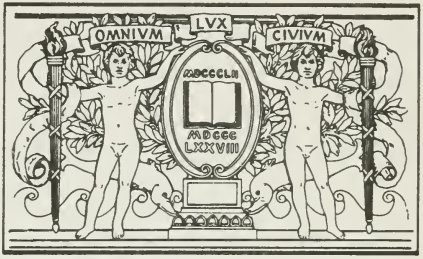

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LITTLE PRUDY'S FLYAWAY SERIES.

AUNT MADGE'S STORY.

BY

SOPHIE MAY,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE PRUDY STORIES," "DOTTY DIMPLE STORIES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS
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AUNT MADGE'S STORY.

CHAPTER I.

TOTTY-WAX.

HERE you sit, Horace, Prudy, Dotty, and Flyaway, all waiting for a story. How shall I begin? I cannot remember the events of my life in right order, so I shall have to tell them as they come into my mind. Let us see. To go back to the long, long summer, when I was a child:

There once lived and moved a little try-patience, called Margaret Parlin; no more nor less a personage than myself, your affectionate auntie, and very humble servant. I

was as restless a baby as ever sat on a papa's knee and was trotted to "Boston." When I cried, my womanly sister 'Ria, seven years old, thought I was very silly; and my brother Ned, aged four, said, "Div her a pill; *I* would!"

He thought pills would cure naughtiness. If so, I ought to have swallowed some. Pity they didn't "div" me a whole box full before I began to creep; for I crept straight into mischief. Aunt Persis, a very proper woman, with glittering black eyes, was more shocked by me than words can tell. She said your grandma "spoiled me by baby-talk; it was very wrong to let little ones hear baby-talk. If she had had the care of me she would have taught me grammar from the cradle." No doubt of it; but unfortunately I had to grow up with my own father and mother, and ever so many

other folks, who were not half as wise as Aunt Persis.

They called me Marg'et, Maggie, Marjie, Madge; and your grandpa's pet name was Totty-wax; only, if I joggled the floor when he shaved, it was full-length "Mar-ga-ret."

I was a sad little minx, so everybody kindly informed me, and so I fully believed. My motto in my little days seems to have been, "*Speak twice before you think once;*" and you will see what troubles it led me into. I never failed to "speak twice," but often forgot the thinking altogether. Margaret means Daisy; but if I was like any flower at all, I should say it was "the lady in the bower." You know it, Prudy, how it peeps out from a tangle of little tendrils? Just so I peeped out, and was dimly seen, through a wild, flying head of hair. Your grandma was ashamed of me, for if she cut

off my hair I was taken for a boy, and if she let it grow, there was danger of my getting a squint in my eye. Sometimes I ran into the house very much grieved, and said, —

"O, mamma, I wasn't doin' noffin, only sitting top o' the gate, and a man said, 'Who's that funny little fellow?'—Please, mamma, won't you not cut my hair no more?"

I was only a wee bit of a Totty-wax when she stopped cutting my yellow hair, and braided it in two little tails behind. The other girls had braids as well as I; but, alas! mine were not straight like theirs; they quirled over at the end. I hated that curly kink; if it didn't go off it would bring my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

But, children, I fear some of the stories I told were crookeder than even my braids. In the first place, I didn't know any better.

I told lies, to hear how funny they would sound. My imagination was large, and my common sense small. I lived in a little world of my own, and had very queer thoughts. Perhaps all children do; what think, Fly? When I was lying in the cradle I found my hands one day, and I shouldn't wonder if I thought they were two weeny babies come visiting; what do you suppose? Of course I didn't know they belonged to me, but I stared at them, and tried to talk. And from that time until I was a great girl, as much as five years old, I was always supposing things were "diffunt" from what they really were. I thought our andirons were made of gold, just like the stars, only the andirons had enough gold in them to sprinkle the whole sky, and leave a good slice to make a new sun. When I saw a rainbow, I asked if

it was "a side-yalk for angels to yalk on?"

I thought the cat heard what I said when I talked to her, and if I picked a flower I kissed it, for "mebbe" the flower liked to be kissed.

I had a great deal of fun "making believe," all to myself. I made believe my mamma had said I might go somewhere, and off I would go, thinking, as I crept along by the fence, bent almost double for fear of being seen, "*Prehaps* she'll tie me to the bed-post for it."

And she always did.

I was the youngest of the family then, but I made believe I had once had a sister Marjie, no bigger than my doll, and a naughty woman in a green cloak came and carried her off in her pocket. I told my little friend Ruphelle so much about this

other Marjie that she believed in her, and after a while I believed in her myself. We used to sit on the hay and talk about her, and wonder if the naughty woman would ever bring her back. We thought it would be nice to have her to play with.

This was not very wicked; it was only a fairy story. But the mischief was, my dear mother did not know where to draw the line between fairy stories and lies. Once I ran away, and Mrs. Gray told her she had seen me playing on the meeting-house steps with Ann Smilie.

"No, mamma," said I, catching my breath, "'twasn't me Mis' Gray saw; I know who 'twas. There's a little girl in this town looks jus' like me; has hair jus' the same; same kind o' dress; lives right under the meeting-house. Folks think it's me!"

Your grandma was distressed to have me

look her straight in the face and tell such a lie; but the more she said, "Why, Margaret!" the deeper I went into particulars.

"Name's Jane Smif. Eats acorns; sleeps in a big hole. Didn't you never hear about her, mamma?"

As I spoke, I could almost see Jane Smif creeping slyly out of the big hole with mud on her apron. She was as real to me as some of the little girls I met on the street; not the little girls I played with, but those who "came from over the river."

My dear mother did not know what to do with a child that had such a habit of making up stories; but my father said,—

"Totty-wax doesn't know any better."

Mother sighed, and answered, "But *Maria* always knew better."

I knew there was "sumpin bad" about me, but thought it was like the black on a

The Blue Parasol. Page 47.

LITTLE PRUDY'S
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negro's face, that wouldn't wash off. The idea of trying to stop lying never entered my head. When mother took me out of the closet, and asked, "Would I be a better girl?" I generally said, "Yes um," very promptly, and cried behind my yellow hair; but that was only because I was touched by the trembling of her voice, and vaguely wished, for half a minute, that I hadn't made her so sorry; that was all.

But when I told that amazing story about Jane Smif, in addition to running away, mother whipped me for the first time in my life with a birch switch.

"Margaret," said she, "if you ever tell another wrong story, I shall whip you harder than this, you may depend upon it."

I was frightened into awful silence for a while, but soon forgot the threat. I was careful to avoid the name of Jane Smif, but

I very soon went and told Ruphelle that my mamma had silk dresses, spangled with stars; "kep' 'em locked into a trunk; did *her* mamma have stars on *her* dresses?" Ruphelle looked as meek as a lamb, but her brother Gust snapped his fingers, and said,—

"O, what a whopper!"

That is why I remember it, for Ruth heard him, and asked what kind of a whopper I had been telling now, and reported it to mother.

Mother rose very sorrowfully from her chair, and bade me follow her into the attic. I went with fear and trembling, for she had that dreadful switch in her hand. Poor woman! She wished she had not promised to use it again, for she began to think it was all in vain. But she must not break her word; so she struck me across the wrists and ankles several times; not

very hard, but hard enough to make me hop about and cry.

When she had finished she turned to go down stairs, but I said something so strange that she stopped short with surprise.

"I *can't* 'pend upon it, mamma," said I, looking out through my hair, with the tears all dried off. "You said you'd whip me harder, but you whipped me *softer*. I *can't* 'pend upon it, mamma. You've telled a lie yourse'f."

What could mother say? I have often heard her describe the scene with a droll smile. She gave me a few more tingles across the neck, to satisfy my ideas of justice; but that was the last time she used the switch for many a long day. Not that I stopped telling marvellous stories; but she thought she would wait till she saw some faint sign in me that I knew the "diffunce" between truth and falsehood.

CHAPTER II.

THE LADY CHILD.

They say I grew very troublesome. Ruthie thought I was always "under foot," and nothing went on, from parlor to kitchen, from attic to cellar, but I knew all about it. There was not a pie, particularly a mince pie, that I didn't try to have a finger in.

But I could not have been in the house *all* the time, for Abner declares I was always out of doors. My little shoes were generally thick with mud, and my little frocks ready every night for the wash-tub. If there was a spoon or a knife missing, Abner often found it in the ploughed field,

where I had been using it as a kind of pick-axe to dig my way through to China. No matter how muddy or slippery the walking, I begged to go out. I had a feeling that I wanted to skip like a lamb, fly like a bird, and dart like a squirrel, and of course needed all out doors to do it in.

"Don't fall down," cried mamma from the window; "look out for the ice."

And I answered back from under my red, quilted hood, —

"Well, if I do fall down and break me, mamma, you mus' pick up all my little bones and glue 'em togedder. God glued 'em in the firs' place, all but my tongue, and that's *nailed* in."

Not nailed in very tight: I could move it fast enough.

And when the snow and ice were gone, I liked to wade ankle-deep in the mud.

Father had to buy me a pair of rubber boots, and that is the first present I remember. They filled my soul with joy. When I said my prayers I had one on each side of me, and when I slept it was with both boots on my pillow. At first I could think of nothing else to wish for; but one day I said, —

"I wish I was a pussy-cat, mamma, so I could have *four* yubber boots!"

Brother Ned and I were great friends. Partly to keep his eye on me, and partly because he enjoyed my conversation, he would say in the cool spring days, "Come, Maggie, dear, bring your cloak, and I'll wrap you up all so warm, so you can sit out on the woodpile while I chop my stint."

I think he must have been a little fellow to chop wood. After I got there, and was having a good time, he often remarked, in tones as cutting as the edge of his hatchet, —

"If I had a brother, Miss Maggie, I shouldn't take pains to wrap up a speck of a girl like you for company."

"Well, if had a little sister, I wouldn't *be* yapped up for comp'ny," retorted I, rubbing my small, red nose; "I'd be a-yockin' her cradle."

Ned laughed at that; for it was just what he expected me to say. We had one bond of sympathy; he longed for a little brother, and I longed for a little sister. He liked to hear me talk grandly about "my new baby-girlie, Rosy Posy Parlin. She wouldn't bl'ong to him any 'tall. She'd be mine clear through."

He led me on to snap out little sharp speeches, which he always laughed at; and I suspect that was one thing that made me so pert. I looked up to him as a superior being, except when I was angry with

him, which was about half the time. I told Ruphelle Allen he was a "bad, naughty boy;" but when she said, "Yes, I think so, too," I instantly cried out, "Well, I guess he's gooder'n *your* brother; so!"

Ruphelle was my bosom friend. We had shaken rattles together before we were big enough to shake hands. She had beautiful brown eyes, and straight, brown hair; while, as for me, my eyes were gray, and my kinky hair the color of tow.

Sister 'Ria called Ruphelle "a nice little girl;" while, owing to the way my hair had of running wild, and the way my frocks had of tearing, she didn't mind saying I was "a real romp," and looked half the time like "an up-and-down fright."

As I always believed exactly what people said, and couldn't understand jokes, I was rather unhappy about this; but con-

cluded I had been made for a vexation, like flies and mosquitos, and so wasn't to blame.

Ruphelle lived on a hill, in the handsomest house in Willowbrook, with a "cupalo" on top, where you could look off and see the whole town, with the blue river running right through the middle, and cutting it in two.

Ruphelle had an English father and mother. I remember Madam Allen's turban, how it loomed up over her stately head like a great white peony. There was a saucy brother Augustus, whom I never could abide, and a grandpa, who always said and did such strange things that I did not understand what it meant till I grew older, and learned that he was afflicted with "softening of the brain."

Then in the kitchen there was a broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced woman, named

Tempy Ann Crawford, whom I always see, with my mind's eye, roasting coffee and stirring it with a pudding-stick, or rolling out doughnuts, which she called crullers, and holding up a fried image, said to be a little sailor boy with a tarpaulin hat on, — only his figure was injured so much by swelling in the lard kettle that his own mother wouldn't have known him; still he made very good eating.

There was a little bound girl in the family, Ann Smiley, who often led me into mischief, but always before Madam Allen looked as demure as a little gray kitten.

Fel and I were uncommonly forward about learning our letters, and wished very much to go to school and finish our education; but were told that the "committee men" would not let us in till we were four years old. My birthday came

the first of May, and very proud was I when mother led me up to a lady visitor, and said, "My little girl is four years old to-day." I thought the people "up street" would ring bells and fire cannons, but they forgot it. I looked in the glass, and could not see the great change in my face which I had expected. I didn't look any "diffunt." How would the teacher know I was so old?

"O, will they let me in?" I asked. "For always when I go to school, then somebody comes that's a teacher, and tells me to go home, and says I musn't stay."

"You will have to wait till the school begins," said my mother, "and that is all the better, for then little Fel can go too." I was willing to wait, for Fel was the other half of me. In three weeks

she was as old as I was, and in the rosy month of June we began to go to the district school.

Your grandfather lived a little way out of town, and Squire Allen much farther; so every morning Ruphelle and her brother Augustus called for me, and we girls trudged along to school together, while Gust followed like a little dog with our dinner baskets. This was one of the greatest trials in the whole world; for, do you see, he had a pair of ears which heard altogether too much, and when we said anything which was not remarkably wise, he had a habit of crying "Pooh!" which was very provoking. We went hand in hand, Fel and I, and counted the steps we took, or hopped on one foot like lame ducklings, and "that great Gust" would look on and laugh. I had so much

to say to Fel that I couldn't help talking, though I knew he was there to hear.

"I'd like to be a *skurrel* once," said I.

"O, pooh!" said Gust.

"I'd like to be 'em *once*, Gust Allen. I'd like to be 'em long enough to know how they feel. Once there was a boy, and he was turned into a skurrel, and his name was Bunny."

"*That's* a whopper, miss!"

Such were "the tricks and the manners" of Fel's disagreeable brother. Do you wonder I called him a trial? But Fel didn't mind him much, for he was good to her, and never laughed at her as he did at me. She was "a lady-child," and her disposition was much sweeter than mine.

Mr. Clifford, who was fitting for college then, used to pass us with a book under his arm and pat our sun-bonnets,

and call us "Juno's swans." We had never seen any swans, and did not know who Juno was, but presumed it was some old woman who kept geese and hens.

When we reached the school-house we were sure of a good time, for the teacher lent us an old blunt penknife, with pretty red stones on the back, the like of which was never seen before in this world. Nobody else ever asked for the knife but us two little tots, and we went up hand in hand; and I spoke the words, while Fel asked with her eyes. Miss Lee smiled blandly, and said, —

"Well, now, the best one may have the knife a little while."

That always happened to be Fel; but it was all the same, for we sat together, and she let me play with it "more than my half." We were really very forward

children, and learned so fast that Miss Lee says now she was very proud of us. I think she was, for I remember how she showed us off before the committee men. We could soon read in the Second Reader, and Fel always cried about the poor blind fiddler to whom Billy gave his cake, and I poked her with my elbow to make her stop. For my part I was apt to giggle aloud when we came to the story of the two silly cats, and the cheese, and the monkey.

Ah, that dear old school-house, where we studied the "Primary's Joggerphy," and saw by the map that some countries are yellow and some fire-red, and the rivers no bigger than crooked knitting-needles! That queer old school-house, with the hacked-up benches, where we learned "rithumtick" by laying buttered paper

over the pictures in Emerson's First Part, and drawing blackbirds, chairs, and cherries all in a row! Fel had a long wooden pencil, but poor I must do with half a one, for 'Ria teased me by making me think people would call me selfish if I had a long pencil all to myself, while my grown-up and much more worthy sister went without any.

That funny old school-house, where Miss Lee used to make a looking-glass of one of the window-panes, by putting her black apron behind it, and peeping in to see if her hair was smooth when she expected the committee men! How afraid we were of those committee men, and how hard we studied the fly-leaves of our "joggerphies" while they were there, feeling so proud that we knew more than "that great Gust!"

That dear, queer, funny old school-house! No other hall of learning will ever seem like that to me!

Didn't we go at noon to the spring under the river bank and "duck" our little heads, till our mothers found it out and forbade it? Didn't we squeeze long-legged grasshoppers, and solemnly repeat the couplet: —

"Grass'per, grass'per Gray,
Give me some m'lasses,
And *then* fly away."

Didn't we fling flat pebbles in the river to the tune of

"One to make ready,
Two to prepare,
Three to go slap-dash,
Right — in — there"?

And how we enjoyed our dinners under the spreading oil-nut tree, chatting as

we ate, and deciding every day anew that Tempy Ann made the nicest sage cheese in the world, and our Ruthie the best turnovers.

Sometimes at night father took me on his lap, and asked, —

"Do you whisper any at school?"

I turned away my face and answered,

"Fel whispers *orfly*."

"Well, does Totty-wax whisper too?"

I dropped my head, and put my fingers in my mouth.

"*Some*," said I, in a low voice. For I began to have a dim idea that it was not proper to tell a lie.

When Fel and I had any little trouble, — which was not often, for Fel generally gave up like a darling, — Maria was always sure to decide that Fel was in the right. Fel thought 'Ria a remarkable

young woman; but I told her privately, in some of our long chats at school, that older sisters were not such blessings as one might suppose. So far as I knew anything about them, they enjoyed scrubbing your face and neck the wrong way with a rough towel, and making you cry. And they had such poor memories, older sisters had. They could never call up the faintest recollection of a fairy story when you asked for one. They were also very much opposed to your standing in a chair by the sink to wipe dishes.

Now Tempy Ann allowed Fel to wipe dishes, and pat out little pies on the cake-board, and bake doll's cakes. She was such a strong, large woman too, she could hold Fel and me at the same time; and after we were undressed, and had our

nighties on, she loved to rock us in the old kitchen chair, and chat with us.

We were confidential sometimes with Tempy Ann, — or I was, — and told her of our plan of going to Italy to give concerts when we grew up. I never saw but one fault in Tempy Ann; she would laugh over our solemn secrets, and would repeat the hateful ditty, —

"Row the boat, row the boat, where shall it stand?
Up to Mr. Parlin's door; there's dry land.
Who comes here, so skip and so skan?
Mr. Gustus Allen, a very likely young man.
He steps to the door, and knocks at the ring,
And says, 'Mrs. Parlin, is Miss Maggie within?'"

Fel and I were both shocked at the bare hint of such a thing as my marrying Gust. We didn't intend to have any great boys about. If Gust should want to marry me, and ride in our gilt-edged concert-coach, with four white hors-

guessed he'd find he wasn't wanted. I should say "No," just as quick!

The more earnest I grew the more Tempy Ann shook with laughing; and I had some reason to suspect she went and told Madam Allen my objections to marrying her son, which I thought was most unfair of Tempy Ann.

CHAPTER III.

THE BLUE PARASOL.

As I look back upon those make-believe days, naughty recollections spring up as fast as dust in August.

Ruphelle seems to me like a little white lily of the valley, all pure and sweet, but I was no more fit to be with her than a prickly thistle. I loved dearly to tease her. Once she had some bronze shoes, and I wanted some too, but there were none to be had in town, and to console myself, I said to dear little Fel, "I'd twice rather have black shoes, bronzes

look so rusty; O, my! If I couldn't have black shoes I'd go barefoot."

Fel did not wish me to see how ashamed this made her feel, but I could not help noticing afterwards that she never wore the bronze shoes to church.

I pined and fretted because I could not have nice things like her. She had a coral necklace, and a blue silk bonnet, and a white dress, with flowers worked all over it with a needle. Did *my* best dress have flowers worked over it with a needle? I should think not. And I hadn't a speck of a necklace, nor any bonnet but just straw. I did not know that Squire Allen was one of the wealthiest men in the state, and could afford beautiful things for his little daughter, while my father was poor, or at least not rich, and my mother had to puzzle her brains a good deal to contrive

to keep her little romping, heedless, try-
patience of a daughter looking respec-
table.

Once, when I was about six years old, I did a very naughty thing. Why, Fly, what makes your eyes shine so? Can it be you like to hear naughty stories? Queer, isn't it? Ah, but this story makes me ashamed, even now that I am a grown-up woman. Wait a minute; I must go back a little; it was the parasol that began it.

When Fel and I were going home from school one night, we stopped to take some of our make-believe slides. Not far from our house, near the river-bank, were two sloping mounds, between which a brook had once run. These little mounds were soft and green, and dotted with white innocence flowers; and what fun it was

to start at the top of one of them, and roll over and over, down into the valley. Somehow, Fel, being a lady-child, never stained her cape bonnet, while mine was all streaks; and she never tore her skirts off the waist; but what if I did tear mine? They always grew together again, I never stopped to think how.

This time, as we were having a jolly roll, Madam Allen rode along in the carryall, with Tempy Ann driving.

"Stop, and let us see what those children are doing," said she; and Tempy Ann stopped.

Fel and I danced upon our feet, and started to run to the carryall, but of course I tumbled down before I got there. While I was picking my foot out of the hole in my frock, I heard Fel exclaim, joyfully,

"O, mamma, is it for me? What a beauty, beauty, beauty!"

"Yes, dear, I bought it for you, but if you are going to be a gypsy child, I suppose you won't want it."

I looked and saw the cunningest little sunshade, with its head tipped on one side, like a great blue morning glory. Never again shall I behold anything so beautiful. Queen Victoria's crown and Empress Eugenie's diamonds wouldn't compare with it for a moment. They say we feel most keenly those joys we never quite grasp; and I know that parasol, swinging round in Fel's little hand, was more bewitching to me than if I had held it myself. O, why wasn't it mine? I thought of Fel's coral necklace, and blue silk bonnet, and the white dress with needlework flowers, and now if she was going to have a

parasol too, I might as well die and done with it.

"O, Marjie, Marjie!" cried she, dancing up to me with her sweet little face in a glow, "*do* you see what I've got?"

I never answered. I just lay there and kicked dirt with my shoe. The carryall was in front of us, and Madam Allen could not see how I behaved.

"Come, little daughter," called she, "jump in and ride home."

But Fel thought she would rather walk with me, for I hadn't noticed her parasol yet. So her mother drove off.

"Isn't it a teenty tonty beauty?" cried she, waving it before me.

I shut my teeth together and kicked.

"You haven't looked, Marjie; see what a teenty tonty beauty!"

She never could quite enjoy her pretty things till I had praised them. I knew that, and took a wicked pleasure in holding my tongue.

"Why, Marjie," said she, in a grieved tone, "why don't you look? It's the teenty tontiest beauty ever you saw."

"There, that's the *threeth* time you've said so, Fel Allen."

"Well, it's the truly truth, Madge Parlin."

"No, it isn't neither; and you're a little lie-girl," snapped I.

This was an absurd speech, and I did not mean a word of it, for I doubt if Fel had ever told a wrong story in her life. "You're a little lie-girl. *Got a parasol, too!*"

She only looked sorry to see me so cross. She couldn't be very unhappy,

standing there stroking those soft silk tassels.

"I hope your mamma 'll give you one, too," murmured the dear little soul.

I sprang up at that.

"O, do you s'pose she would?" I cried; and by the time I had taken another roll down the bank my spirits rose wonderfully, and I let her put the parasol in my hand, even exclaiming, —

"No, I never did see anything so nice!" But I secretly hoped my own would be nicer still.

"Come home to my house," said I, "and ask my mamma if I can have a parasol too."

We were very near the house, and she went in with me. Mother was in the kitchen, stewing apple-sauce for supper. I remember what a tired look she had

on her face, and how wearily she stirred the apple-sauce, which was bubbling in the porcelain kettle.

"You speak now," whispered I to Fel. "You speak first."

This was asking a great deal of the dear little friend I had just called a lie-girl. If she hadn't loved me better, much better than I deserved, she would have turned and run away. As it was, she called up all her courage, the timid little thing, and fluttering up to my mother, gently poked the end of the parasol into the bow of her black silk apron.

"Please, O, please, Mrs. Parlin, do look and see how pretty it is."

That was as far as she could get for some time, till mother smiled and kissed her, and asked once or twice, "Well, dear, what is it?"

I ran into the shed and back again, too excited to stand still. Mother was always so tender of Fel, that I did think she couldn't refuse her. I was sure, at any rate, she would say as much as, "We will see about it, dear;" but instead of that she gave her an extra hug, and answered sorrowfully, —

"I wish I could buy Margaret a parasol; but really it is not to be thought of."

I dropped into the chip-basket, and cried.

"If she knew how to take care of her things perhaps I might, but it is wicked to throw away money."

"O, mamma, *did* you s'pose I'd let it fall in the *hoss troth?*" screamed I, remembering the fate of my last week's hat, with the green vine round it. "If you'll

only give me a pairsol, mamma, I won't never carry it out to the barn, nor down to the river, nor anywhere 'n this world. I'll keep it in your bandbox, right side o' your bonnet, where there don't any mice come, or any flies, and never touch it, nor ask to see it, nor — "

"There, that'll do," said mother, stopping me at full tide. "I would be glad to please my little girl if I thought it would be right; but I have said No once, and after that, Margaret, you know how foolish it is to tease."

Didn't I know, to my sorrow? As foolish as it would be to stand and fire popguns at the rock of Gibraltar.

I rushed out to the barn, and never stopped to look behind me. Fel followed, crying softly; but what had I to say to that dear

little friend, who felt my sorrows almost as if they were her own?

"You didn't ask my mamma pretty, and that's why she wouldn't give me no pair-sol."

No thanks for the kind office she had performed for me; no apology for calling her a lie-girl. Only, —

"You didn't ask my mamma pretty, Fel Allen."

She choked down one little sob that ought to have broken my heart, and turned and went away. You wonder she should have loved me. I suppose I had "good fits;" they say I was honey-sweet sometimes; but as I recall my little days, it does seem to me as if I was always, always snubbing that precious child. When she was out of sight, I dived head first into the hay, and tried for as much as ten minutes to hate my

mother. After a long season of sulks, such as it is to be hoped none of *you* ever indulged in, I stole back to the house through the shed, and Ruth, who did not know what had broken my heart, exclaimed, —

"Why, Maggie, what ails you? You've fairly cried your eyes out, child!"

I climbed a chair, and looked in the glass, which hung between the kitchen windows, and sure enough I was a sight to behold. My eyes, always very large, were now red and swollen, and seemed bursting from their sockets. I had never thought before that eyes could burst; but now I ran to Ruthie in alarm.

"I *have* cried my eyes out! O, Ruthie, I've *started* 'em!"

She laughed at my distress, kissed me, and set me at ease about my eyeballs; but the parasol was denied me, and I [illegible]

that, blind or not, I could never be happy without it.

The little bits of girls had afternoon parties that summer; it was quite the fashion; and not long after this Madam Allen made one for Fel. Everybody said it was the nicest party we had had; for Tempy Ann made sailor-boy doughnuts, with sugar sprinkled on, and damson tarts, and lemonade, to say nothing of "sandiges," with chicken in the middle. I loved Fel dearly, I know I did; but by fits and starts I was so full of envy that I had to go off by myself and pout.

"A party and a pairsol the same year! And Fel never 'spected the pairsol, and didn't ask real hard for the party. But that was always the way; her mamma wanted her to have good times, and so did

Tempy Ann. *Some* folks' mammas didn't care!"

I was willing nice things should fall to Fel's lot; but I wanted just as nice ones myself.

Fel showed the girls her "pairsol," and they all said they meant to have one too; all but me; I could only stand and look on, with my eyeballs just ready to pop out of my head.

I remember what sick dolls we had that afternoon; and when any of them died, the live dolls followed them to the grave with weeping and wailing, and their wee handkerchiefs so full of grief that you could trace the procession by the tears that dripped upon the carpet. Yes; but the mourners all had the cunningest little "pairsols" of nasturtium leaves. There wasn't a "single one doll" that marched without a

pairsol, not even my Rosy Posy; for I had a motherly heart, and couldn't mortify *my* child! She *should* have "sumpin to keep the sun off," if it cost the last cent her mamma had in the world!

I had a dismal fit just before supper, and went into Grandpa Harrington's room, back of the parlor. He was always fond of little folks, but very queer, as I have told you. He had a fire in the fireplace, and was sitting before it, though it was summer. He looked up when I went in, and said, "How do, darling? My feet are as cold as a dead lamb's tongue; does your father keep sheep?"

Next minute he said, —

"My feet are as cold as a dog's nose; does your father keep a dog?"

That was the way he rambled on from one thing to another. But when he saw I

was low-spirited, and found by questioning me that I needed a parasol, and couldn't live long without one, he took me on his knee, and said kindly, —

"Never mind it, Pet; you shall have a parasol. I will give you one."

I could hardly speak for joy. I did not feel ashamed of myself till afterwards, for Grandpa Harrington did not seem like other people, and I saw no harm in whining to him about my troubles.

CHAPTER IV.

LIZE JANE.

But my happiness did not last long. Grandpa Harrington never thought of my parasol again from that day to the day he died; and little witch and try-patience though I was, I dared not remind him of his promise, still less tell my mother about it.

It was hard to have my hopes raised so high, only to be dashed to the ground; harder still to have to keep it all to myself, and see Fel trip along under that sunshade without a care in the world. If she had been the least bit proud I couldn't have borne it; but even as it was, it wore

upon me. Once I called out in severe tones, "Ho, little lie-girl; got a pairsol too!" but was so ashamed of it next minute that I ran up to her and hugged her right in the street, and said, "I didn't mean the leastest thing. I love you jus' the same, if you *have* got a blue pairsol, and you may wear it to meetin', and I'll *try* not to care."

And now I come to the naughty story.

I could not always have Fel for a playmate; she was too delicate to be racing about from morning till night as I did, and when she had to stay in the house, I found other girls to romp with me. Sometimes, especially if I felt rather wicked, I enjoyed Eliza Jane Bean, a girl two or three years older than myself. There was a bad fascination about "Lize." When she fixed her big black eyes upon you, she made you think

of all sorts of delightful things you wanted to do, only they were strictly forbidden. Her father and mother were not very good people, and did not go to church Sundays. They lived in a low red house near the Gordons. You never saw it, children; it was pulled down ever so long ago, and used for kindlings. People called the house "the Bean Pod," because there were nine little beans in it beside the big ones. Rattlety bang! Harum scarum! There was always a great noise in that house, and people called it "the rattling of the beans." It was well it stood on a corner lot, and poor old Mr. Gordon was so deaf.

Lize Jane used to come to our house for currants. My mamma did not like to have me see much of her, but could not refuse the currants, for our bushes were loaded. It seemed as if the family must have lived

half the summer on currants and molasses; for almost every night there was Lize Jane with her big tin pail. It had holes in the bottom, and the juice used to run out sometimes upon her dress; but it didn't make much difference, for her dress was never clean.

One night she came for currants when they were almost gone. Mother had been sick, and was very late about making jelly. She told Eliza Jane she couldn't let her come any more after that night; the rest of the fruit must be saved for our own use. Lize Jane said nothing, but she rolled her black eyes round towards me, and I felt a little ashamed, for I knew she thought mother was stingy, and that was why she rolled her eyes.

I went into the kitchen, and said to Ruth, —

"Don't you want me to pick you a bowl of currants."

Of course she did. She didn't know Lize Jane was there, or she wouldn't have been so pleased and so ready to get me my sun-bonnet. She had to reach it down from a hook in the ceiling. That was the place where Ned hung it when he wanted to "pester" me; he did it with an old rake handle.

When I was going anywhere to meet Lize Jane, I always felt as if I was stealing raisins. I never exactly stole raisins; but when my mother said I might go to the box and get two or three, I had sometimes taken a whole handful. I knew by the pricking of my conscience that that was wrong, and in the same way I knew that this was wrong too. Mother was in the green chamber, covering an ottoman with

green carpeting, so she wouldn't see me from that side of the house.

I ran into the garden, and, going up close to Lize Jane, began to pick with all my might. "My bowl fills up faster 'n your pail," said I. "Cause its littler," said she; "and besides, I'm picking 'em off the stems."

"What do you do that for, Lize Jane? It takes so long."

"I know it; it takes foreverlastin'; but mother told me to, so'st I could get more into my pail."

I opened my eyes.

"She told me to get my pail chuck full. She didn't use to care, but now the currants are most gone, and she wants all she can get."

I said nothing, but I remember I thought

Mrs. Bean was a queer woman, to want our very last currants.

"Sh'an't you have your party before they're all gone?" said Lize Jane.

"What party?"

"Why, the one you're going to have."

I suppose she knew my heart was aching for one.

"I want a party dreffully," said I, "but mamma won't let me."

"Won't let you?" cried Lize Jane, in surprise. "Why, Fel Allen had hers last week."

"I know it, and Tempy Ann made us some lemonade."

"Did she? I wish I'd been there," said Lize, pursing her lips. "But Fel lives in such a monstrous nice house, and wouldn't ask me to her party; that's why. Mother says I hadn't oughter care, though,

for when she dies she'll lay as low as me."

I did not understand this speech of Mrs. Bean's, which Lize Jane repeated with such a solemn snap of her black eyes; but it came to me years afterwards, and I think it the worst teaching a mother could give her little child. No wonder Lize Jane was full of envy and spite.

"But you'll ask me to *your* party, won't you?" said she, with a coaxing smile.

"I can't, if I don't have one, Lize Jane."

"You're a-makin' believe, Mag Parlin. You will have one; how can you help it, with a garden full of gooseb'ries and rubub?"

"And thimbleberries, too," added I, surveying the premises with a gloomy eye. We certainly had enough to eat, and it

was a very strange thing that I couldn't give a party.

"Has your mother got any cake in the house?" added Lize.

"Yes, lots in the tin chest; but she never lets me eat a speck, hardly," bemoaned I. I was not in the habit of talking to Lize Jane of family matters; but she had shown so much good sense in saying I ought to have a party, that my heart was touched.

"Your mother, seems to me, she never lets you do a thing," returned Lize Jane, in a pitying tone. "Ain't you goin' to have a silk pairsol, like Fel Allen's? I should think you might."

She had driven the nail straight to the mark that time. I could have wailed; but was I going to have Lize Jane go home

and tell that I was a baby? No! and I spoke up very pertly,—

"Where's *your* pairsol, Lize Jane Bean? You never had one any more'n me."

"No; but there's something I have got, though, better than that. Good to eat, too. And I'll tell you what; if you'll ask me to your party, I'll bring you some in a covered dish."

"What is it, Lize? Ice cream?"

For her face was wondrous sweet.

"Ice cream! How'd you s'pose I kep' that froze? No!" and the bewitching sparkle of her eye called up luscious ideas. I could almost see apricot preserves, pine apples, and honey-heart cherries floating in the air. But why was it a covered dish? "Somethin' nuff sight better 'n ice cream, but I shan't tell what."

"O, I wish you'd bring it to me in the

covered dish, 'thout any party, for my mother won't let me have one, Lize, now truly."

"Then you can't have the — what I was goin' to bring," said Lize Jane, firmly.

"That's too bad," I cried; but it was of no use talking; she couldn't be moved any more than the gravel walk, or the asparagus bed.

"Your mother ain't much sick, is she?"

"Not now," replied I; "her strength is better."

"Well, then, why don't you ask some girls to come, and she'll get 'em some supper; see if she don't."

I was so shocked that I almost fell into a currant bush.

"Lize Jane Bean, what you talking about?"

"Why, you said your mother warn't sick."

"No, her strength is better, but she don't 'low me to do things, Lize Jane Bean, 'thout — 'thout she lets me."

"Of course not; but I guess she don't know you want a party so dreadful bad, Maggie, or she *would* let you. I don't believe your mother is ugly."

"But she never said I might have a party, though."

"No, for she don't think about it. She ain't a bad woman, your mother ain't, only she don't think. Your mother don't *mean* to be ugly."

Lize Jane spoke in a large-hearted way, at the same time stripping currant-stems very industriously. "She'd feel glad afterwards, s'posing you *did* have a party, I'll bet."

"O, Lize Jane, what a girl! 's if I'd do it 'thout my mother said I might."

"O, I didn't mean a real big party; did you s'pose I did? I didn't know but you could ask me and some of the girls to supper, and not call it a party. We'd play ou' doors."

"O, I didn't know *that's* what you meant. But I can't, — 'cause, — 'cause."—

"Well, you needn't, if you don't want to; but I didn't know but you'd like to see that — what I's going to bring."

"But I can't be naughty, and get tied to the bed-post," said I, thoughtfully. "Is that what you's going to bring, something I never saw in all my life, Lize Jane?"

"Yes, I'm certain sure you never."

And she made up another delicious face, that filled the air around with sweet visions.

"And would you bring it if I didn't ask but — but — two girls?"

"No, I don't *think* I could," replied Lize Jane, squinting her eyes in deep meditation. I don't hardly think I *could*; but if you had four girls I'd bring it, and *risk* it."

"Four 'thout you?"

"No, me 'n three more, if you're so dreadful scared."

That settled the matter. With my usual rashness I cried out, —

"Well, I'll ask 'em."

CHAPTER V.

THE PARTY.

I WENT to bed that night in great excitement, and I dare say did not get to sleep for ten minutes or so. What strange thing was this I was about to do?

"Well," said I, "it's only four girls, that's all. I know my mamma'd be glad to have me have 'em, but I don't dare ask her; so I'll have 'em *'thout* asking. She says she wants her little daughter to be happy. That's what she says; but she don't give me no pairsol. How'd she 'spect I's goin' to be happy? But I could be some happy if I had four girls, — not a party, but four girls."

The next day was Saturday, the day I had agreed upon with Lize Jane. I chewed my bonnet-strings all the way to school, and never invited Fel till we got into the entry. At recess I asked Abby Gray and Dunie Foster; that made up the four girls. But when school was out, I happened to think I might as well have a few more, and singled out Sallie Gordon, Mary Vance, and Anna Carey; but Phebe Grant was standing close by, and I knew she would be "mad" if I didn't ask her; and after that I flew about and dropped invitations right and left, till I entirely forgot that I was doing it without leave. "I want you to come to my house, to my party, to-morrow afternoon," — began to sound perfectly proper.

Instead of speaking *twice* before I thought, I spoke thirty or forty times. I didn't slight

anybody. I asked all the First and Second Reader classes, and the little specks of girls in A B C. They all looked very much pleased. Some of them had never been invited to a party before, and didn't know enough to find the way to "my house;" but I thought, while I was about it, I might as well make a clean sweep: it was no wickeder to have a big party than a little one. I was sorry enough that boys were not in fashion, for I wanted a few. There was Tommy Gordon in particular, who always had his pockets full of "lickerish" and pep-'mints; it was as much as I could do to help asking him. As for Gust Allen, I would as soon have had a wild monkey, and that is the truth.

I trudged home at noon, with my eyes looking strange, I know. I had done my *speaking*, and now I began to *think*. It

came over me like a little whirlwind. I realized for the first time what I had done.

Ruth was hurrying up the dinner.

"Don't come near me, child," said she. "I've got *my* hands full."

I went into the sitting-room. There was mother on the sofa, bathing her head with cologne. It didn't seem much like having a party! She could eat no dinner, and father said she looked as if she ought to be in bed.

"I feel almost sick enough to be in bed," said she; "but I must help Mrs. Duffy put down that parlor carpet. I have waited for her ever since the carpet was made, and this was the very first day she could come.'

"O, dear," thought I, "where'll I have my party?"

"Can't Mrs. Duffy put the carpet down alone?" asked father.

"No; she would skew it badly."

"But, my dear, you are sick; why not have Ruth help her?"

"Ruth does not understand the business as well as I do; and more than that, we have a large quantity of raspberries to be made into jelly. They would spoil if they were kept over Sunday."

Worse and worse! Who was going to get supper for my party?

Then I remembered that wonderful *something* which Lize Jane had promised to bring in the covered dish, — that delicious mystery which had been the first cause of getting me into trouble. Perhaps there would be enough of it to go round, and we could finish off with cake. I began to think it wasn't much matter what we had to eat.

While life lasts I shall never forget that

horrible afternoon. What could I say? What could I do? I felt as Horace used to, as if I should "go a-flyin'." I ran into the parlor where mother and Mrs. Duffy were putting down the carpet, and hopped about till I got a tack in my foot; and after mother had drawn it out, and I had done crying, I ventured to say, —

"Mamma, there's a little girl coming to see me this afternoon. Are you willing?"

"This afternoon? Who?"

She might have asked who wasn't coming, and I could have answered better.

I thought a minute, and then said, "Fel," for I knew she liked her best of all the little folks.

"Very well," said mother, and went on stretching the carpet.

Fel came so often that it was hardly worth mentioning.

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"But, mamma, there's somebody else coming, too. It's — it's — Dunie Foster."

Dunie was a lady-child, almost as well-behaved as Fel.

"Ah! I'd rather have her come some other time. But run away, dear, you are troubling me. Take the little girls into the dining-room. I want the sitting-room kept nice for callers."

I couldn't get my mouth open to say another word. Three o'clock was the usual hour for little girls to go to parties, and I flew into the kitchen to ask Ruth what time it was.

"Two o'clock," she said.

"And in an hour would it be three? How many minutes was an hour? Did that jelly boil fast enough? Did jelly bake all hard in the little glass cups so you could eat it the same day — the same night for supper?

Was there any cooked chicken in the house, with breastings in (stuffing)? Any sandiges? Why didn't Ruthie make sandiges? Do it very easy. Why didn't Ruthie make sailor-boy doughnuts? *I* could sprinkle the sugar on 'em, see 'f I couldn't."

In the midst of my troublesome chatter Abner came around to the kitchen door with the horse and wagon, saying he was going to mill, and would Tot like to go, too?

"Will you be back by three o'clock?" said I.

"Yes; it won't take me half an hour."

"I wonder what's the child's notion of watching the clock so snug," remarked Ruth, as I was darting into the parlor to ask if I might go to mill.

As I rode along with Abner, and felt the soft summer air blow on my face, and saw

the friendly trees nodding "Good day," it seemed as if I had left trouble behind me. What was the use in going back to it? I had half a mind to run away.

"I didn't want to stay and see those little girls starve to death. No place but the 'dine-room' and the barn to play in! Be tied to the bed-post for it too! Ought to be! Wicked-bad-girl! But would mamma tie me any *shorter* if I staid away till the moon came up? And then the girls'd be gone! Get away from Abner just 's easy! He'll be a talkin' to the man 'th flour on his coat, then he'll look round an' I'll be gone, an' he'll say, 'That child's "*persest*"'; he always says '*persest*,' and then he'll go home and forget."

But stop a minute; what would the girls think?

"They'll think me very *unagreeable* to go

off and leave my party. They'll call me a little lie-girl; they wont ask me to their house no more."

So I didn't run away. I sat in the wagon, groaning softly to myself. The way of the transgressor *is* hard. *Every* way was hard to me since I had set out to do wrong. It was hard to run off and be called "unagreeable," and very, very hard to go home and face my troubles.

I had not supposed there was the least danger of any one's coming before three o'clock; but to my surprise, when we reached the house, I found the front entry full of small girls — the little specks in A B C. There they stood, some of them with fingers in their mouths, while mother held the parlor-door open, and was asking them very kindly what they wanted. "Margaret," said she, "these little girls have

been here as much as ten minutes; I don't know yet what they came for; perhaps you can find out."

Poor, sick mother was holding her head with her hand as she spoke. I hated myself so that I wanted to scream.

"Hattie," stammered I, taking one of the tiny ones by the hand, "come out in the garden, and I'll get you some pretty posies." Of course the rest followed like a flock of sheep. But we had hardly reached the garden before I saw three or four more girls coming. It was of no use; something must be done at once. I left the A B C girls staring at the garden gate, and ran to the house for dear life.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried I, as soon as I could get my breath; and then I rolled myself up into a little ball of anguish on the parlor carpet.

"Where's the camfire?" exclaimed Mrs. Duffy, springing up; "that child's really a fainting off." Mother came to me and took my hands; she says I was so pale that it quite startled her. "Where do you feel sick, dear?" she asked tenderly.

That sympathetic tone broke me down entirely. My stubborn pride yielded at once, and so did that bitter feeling I had been cherishing so long in regard to the parasol.

"O, mamma!" sobbed I, catching the skirt of her dress and hiding my head in it, and forgetting all about Mrs. Duffy; "I don't care what you do, mamma. You may send 'em home, and tell 'em they didn't be invited; you may go to the front door and say it this minute."

"It's gone till her head," said Mrs. Duffy, laying down the hammer; "see her shuvver!

She nades hot wather till her fate, poor thing."

"I don't care what you do to me, mamma; you may tie me to the bed-post, and sew me up in a bag and throw me in the river. You would, if you knew what I've been a doin'. I—I—*I've got a party!*"

Mother held her hand to her head and stared at me. Just then the door-bell rang.

"That's some of the party," wailed I. "And those little bits of girls were some, and this is some now, and more's a comin'. I'm *so* glad you didn't give me no pairsol, mamma."

"It can't be; Margaret, you haven't—"

"Yes, I have too. Yes, mamma, I've got a party! I'm wickeder 'n ever you heard of. Wont you put me in the river? I want you to. O, I'm *so* glad you didn't give me no pairsol."

Mother pulled the carpet and looked at me, and then pulled the carpet again. She was considering what to do. Ruthie had gone to the door when the bell rang; we heard her voice in the entry.

"Call Ruth in here to me," said mother, "and take your little girls into the garden."

I knew by that, that she didn't mean to send them home; and O, how I loved her. It seemed to me I loved her for the first time in my life, for I never knew before how good she was, or how beautiful! Her head was tied up in a handkerchief, and she wore a faded calico dress and a tow apron, but I thought she looked like an angel. I lay flat at her feet and adored her.

While I was taking my little girls into the garden and trying to play, mother was talking to Ruthie about this strange freak of mine. This I learned afterwards.

"I don't like to disappoint all these little children," said she, "and I don't like to expose my naughty daughter either. You see, Ruth, if they find out what a dreadful thing she has done, they will not like her any more, and their mothers will not let them come to see her. And that may make Margaret a worse girl, for she needs a great deal of love."

"I know it," said Ruthie; she's got a big, warm heart of her own, and one can feel to forgive such children better than the cold, selfish ones; you know that yourself, Mrs. Parlin. Why, bless her, she never had an orange or a peach in her life, that she didn't give away half."

It gratified my poor mother to see Ruthie so ready to take my part. It was more than she liked to do to ask the tired girl to go to work again over the hot stove and

prepare a supper for an army of children; but Ruthie did not wait to be asked; for love of mother and for love of me, she set herself about it with a hearty good-will. I do not remember much that was said or done for the rest of the afternoon; only, I know every single girl came that was invited, and they all said it was a nicer party than even Fel's; but Fel didn't care; she was glad of it. Of course it was nicer, for Ruthie spread the table in the front yard, and 'Ria was so kind as to adorn it with flowers, and lay wreaths of cedar round the plates. We had cup-custards and cookies, and, something I didn't expect, little "sandiges," with cold ham in the middle. But didn't I know it was more than I deserved? Didn't my heart swell with shame, and guilt, and gratitude? I remember rushing into

the house in the very midst of the supper, just to hug mother and Ruthie.

The funny thing, the only funny thing there was to the whole party, was Lize Jane's present. In my agitation I had almost forgotten how anxious I was to see it. She came dressed very smartly in red calico, with a blue bow at her throat. Her hair was remarkably glossy, and she told us, in a loud whisper, she had "stuck it down with bear's grease and cologne." She brought her old tin pail, the very one she picked currants in, only it really had a cover on it now, and *that* was what she called "a covered dish." And guess what was in it?

Pumpkin sauce! The drollest looking mess. Dried pumpkin stewed in molasses. She said I never tasted anything like it before, and I am sure I never did, and never should want to again.

And that was the end of my party. Mother didn't sew me up in a bag and throw me in the river, for she was the most patient woman alive. She only forbade my going to anybody's house for a long time to come. It was a hard punishment; but I knew it was just, and I could not complain. My heart was really touched, and I had learned a lesson not easily forgotten. When I think of that party now, it is with a feeling of gratitude to my dear mother for her great forbearance, and her wise management of a wayward, naughty little girl.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PATCHWORK SCHOOL.

Fel and I had begun to read before we were four years old, and by the time we were six we knew too much to go to the town school any more. I believe that was what we thought; but the fact was, Fel was very delicate, and her mother considered the walk to the school-house too long for her, and the benches too hard. She wished to have a governess come and live in the house, so the child could study at home. I thought this was too bad. I knew almost as much as Fel did. Why

must I go to the town school if it wasn't good enough for her?

"Mamma, I wish I was del'cate," whined I. "Ned snipped off my finger in the corn-sheller, — don't that make me del'cate?"

"Delicate!" said Ned. "You're as tough as a pine knot."

I thought this was a cruel speech. He ought to be ashamed to snip off my finger, and *then* call me tough.

In looking about for a governess, Madam Allen thought at once of dear Martha Rubie, who lived just across the garden from their house. Uncle John's wife was her sister, the aunt Persis I told you about, who thought I ought not to hear baby-talk. Aunt Persis wasn't willing her sister Martha should go away from home; she said Fel might trip across the gar-

den and say her lessons at her house. Fel didn't like to do it, for she was afraid of aunt Persis — she wouldn't go unless I would go with her; and finally mother said I might; so it turned out just as well for me as if I was delicate. She wanted Gust to go too, and he wasn't willing. But if Fel set her heart on anything it generally came about.

"Augustus," said Madam Allen, smiling with her pleasant black eyes, which had a firm look in them, "you will recite to Miss Rubie if I wish it."

"Well, then, I want some of the other fellows to 'cite too," sniffed little Gust; "'tisn't fair for one boy to go to a patchwork school, long o' girls."

And thus it happened that several children joined us, and Miss Rubie had quite a sizable school.

And now I must tell you what sort of a house we went to; for the whole thing was very queer. In the first place, there was dear uncle John, — yes, *your* uncle John; but don't ask any questions; I'll tell you more by and by, — and his wife, that was aunt Persis; and his wife's sister, dear sweet Martha Rubie; and his little boy, Zed. Aunt Persis was an elegant, stately woman, but there was always something odd about her. I think myself it was odd she shouldn't like baby-talk.

She knit herself into my earliest recollections when she was Pauline Rubie, and after she married uncle John, she knit my stockings just the same, and uncle never interfered with the stripes, red and white, running round and round like a barber's pole. They were the pride of my life till Gust Allen said they made my little

legs look like sticks of candy, good enough to eat. Then I hated them; but aunt Persis had got in the way of knitting stripes, and wouldn't stop it, beg as I might — for she always thought her way was right, and couldn't be improved.

Among other things she thought she knew all about medicine. There was a system called "hot crop," or "steaming," and she believed in it, and wanted everybody to take fiery hot drinks, and be steamed. That was the chief reason why we were so afraid of her.

Her house was a very pleasant, cosy one, or would have been if it hadn't had such a scent of herbs all through it. The first day we went to school aunt Persis met us at the door, and asked Fel to put out her tongue. Then she took us to a cupboard, and gave Fel something to drink,

that we both thought was coffee; but it was stinging hot composition tea. Miss Rubie came into the kitchen just as Fel was catching her breath over the last mouthful, and said she, —

"O, Persis, how could you?"

We followed Miss Rubie into the schoolroom as fast as we could go. This schoolroom was right over a little cellar, just deep enough for a grown person to stand up in. It was called the "jelly-cellar," and when we were naughty Miss Rubie opened a trap-door and let us down. I was so restless and noisy that for a while I spent half my time in that cellar, surrounded by jars of jelly and jam. And I am afraid I could say sometimes, "How sweet is solitude!" for there was just light enough from the one window to give me a clear view of the jars, with their nice white

labels, and more than once I did — I blush to confess it — I did put my fingers into a peach jar and help myself to preserves. I was 'ld enough to know better; I resisted the temptation a great many days, but one unlucky morning I espied Dunie Foster coming up from the cellar with jelly stains on her white apron, and that set me to thinking.

"Ah, ha; Dunie eats perserves, and looks just as innocent's a lamb! Folks think she's better 'n me, but she isn't, she's a *make-believer*. I wonder if it's dreadful wicked to take perserves? Prehaps auntie spects us to eat 'em. Any way, Fel Allen never gets put down cellar, and it's real mean; and if I have to stay down there the whole time I ought to have something to make me feel better; I feel real hungry, and they ought to *spect* I'd eat per-

serves." So I did it; partly because Dunie did, partly because Fel wasn't punished and ought to be, and partly because it was most likely auntie put 'em there a-purpose! I think I never did it but three times; and the third time it was thoroughwort and molasses! Strong, I assure you, boiled down to a thick sirup. I had the jar at my lips, and had taken a long, deep draught, when I happened to look up, and there was aunt Persis going by the window, and looking straight down at me!

I was so startled by the bitter taste in my mouth and the sight of aunt Persis, both coming at the same time, that I gave a little scream, and pranced round and round the cellar like a wild animal. Miss Rubie heard me, and came down to see what was the matter. She did not ask if

I had been meddling with the jars; but she must have known, for a sticky stream was trickling over my dress, and I had set the sirup down on the floor with the cover off. She bent a keen glance on me, and at the same time I saw a little twinkle in her eye. I suppose she thought my guilt would bring its own punishment, for she probably knew the thoroughwort would make me sick.

"Are you ready now to be a good, quiet girl?" said she. I had been shut down for noisiness.

"Yes'm," said I, meekly, and followed her up stairs.

But though my heart was heavy with shame, I could not help thinking, "What orful tastin' perserves!" and wondering if aunt Persis really was crazy, as Tempy Ann said she was.

Miss Rubie had had reason to think be-

fore that some of the children went to those jars, but she did not say so; she merely remarked, —

"It is nearly noon, children; you may lay aside your books now, and, if you like, I will tell you a story."

Everybody was pleased but me. I wanted to go home. The story was from the text, "Thou, God, seest me." It was about Adaline Singleton, a little girl who took her mother's cake without leave, and her mother counted the slices, and found her out.

I could not look up at Miss Rubie all the while she was talking, but I noticed Dunie Foster did. I was trying to rub that zigzag stream of sirup off my apron; and O, how sick I grew! Would she ever stop?

I knew God had seen me yesterday and day before, when I ate peach preserves,

and I had no doubt it was to punish me that I had been allowed to swallow this bitter stuff to-day. But, O, if I could go home!

I never see that story of Adaline Singleton now among my books but it calls up a remembrance of guilt and nausea too. I would give a great deal, little Fly, if I hadn't so many bad things to remember. It is because I hope to do you good that I am willing to tell of them. May you have a purer childhood to look back upon!

Thankful was I when school was out that noon, but I wasn't able to go again in the afternoon; and my mother knew why!

It was the last time I was ever put in that cellar. Miss Rubie found another method of punishment; and I think I can say truthfully it was the last time I ever took sweetmeats without leave. I did other wrong

things in plenty, but that I could never do again. When mother said I might go to the box and get "half a dozen raisins," I got half a dozen, and not a handful. Those solemn words rang in my ears, — "Thou, God, seest me," — just as Miss Rubie had spoken them in her low, sweet tones.

For days I dared not meet aunt Persis's eye, but she treated me just the same, often loading me down with pennyroyal and spearmint to take home to mother. I did not know she was near-sighted, and had not seen me drinking her thoroughwort. It was the first medicine of hers I had ever taken, and that bitter taste in my mouth decided me, upon reflection, that she *was* crazy. As it proved, I was not very far wrong.

There had been something the matter with her wits for two or three years, and she

was growing queerer and queerer. People began to wonder what made her want to look at their tongues so much. She said now if she met people on her way to church, "Please, put out your tongue;" and sometimes said it on the very church steps. This was queer; but they did not know how much queerer she was at home. We children could have told how she came into the school-room and felt all our pulses, but we thought Miss Rubie would be sorry to have us tell.

Her little boy Zed, about four years old, had to take her dreadful medicines, of course, for medicine was the very thing auntie was crazy about. He carried some of his doses into school to drink at recess, and we all pitied him. Sometimes he ate dry senna and raisins mixed on a plate, and we teased away the raisins, and he had to

chew the senna "bare." He cried then, and said we ought to help eat that too, and we did. I thought it had a crazy taste, like the thoroughwort, and was sorry Zed had a liver inside him, and wished that his mother hadn't found it out.

Miss Rubie was very good and patient with us, but we began to dread to go to school. I overheard Tempy Ann say to Polly Whiting, —

"The story is, that Mrs. Adams (aunt Persis) steamed her own mother out of the world."

"You don't say so!" said Polly. "How long since?"

"About two years ago. The poor old lady sailed off very easy, with a jug of hot water close to her nose."

That frightened us dreadfully. We knew aunt Persis steamed Zed, for he said so;

and what if she should steam us all out of the world with jugs of hot water close to our noses? And she was always trying to make Fel swallow something bad, and always talking about her white face. "Tell your mother to let me have you for a month," said she, "and I'll put roses into your cheeks, my dear."

Fel was so afraid that she trembled when we went into the house, expecting auntie would spring out upon her, and set her over the fire to steam. But she was such a patient, still little thing that she never complained, even to her own mother, and I was too rattle-brained to think much about it, though if I myself had expected to be cooked, the whole town would have heard of it.

Zed grew paler and paler. I asked Miss Rubie, privately, "what made his mother

boil him?" And she smiled, though not as if she was happy, and said, —

"She doesn't boil him when I can help it, dear."

About this time I heard my mother say to my father she wished uncle John was at home, for auntie acted so odd, and her eyes looked so strange.

"Yes, mamma," cried I, rushing in from the nursery, "she boils her little boy, and she wants to boil Fel. I should think you'd tell Fel's mother, for Fel dassent tell, she's so scared."

I think mother went right to Madam Allen with what I said, for the next night, when I was at Squire Allen's, and Fel was sitting in her mamma's lap, Madam Allen said, —

"Why didn't my little girl let me know she was afraid of Mrs. Adams? When dar-

ling feels unhappy about anything she must always tell mamma."

Fel was so glad somebody was going to protect her, that she threw her arms about her mother's neck, and sobbed for joy. "Don't let her hurt Zed either," said she. She was such a dear little soul, always thinking about others.

"Now tell me if that boy has got a name?" spoke up grandpa Harrington. That was what he always asked when any one spoke of Zed.

"Yes, sir; his name is Rosalvin Colvazart," said Madam Allen. "Zed is for short."

"I know, I know, Rose Albert Coffeepot," laughed grandpa. He had said that fifty times, but he always thought it a new joke.

That night, while we were all soundly asleep, we were suddenly roused by the sharp ringing of the door-bell. Squire Allen went to the door, and there, on the steps, stood our dear teacher, Martha Rubie, in her night dress, with a shawl over her shoulders.

"O, Mr. Allen! O, madam! come quick! My sister is worse. She has steamed Zed, and she was trying him with a fork; but I locked him into the closet. Do come and take care of her. She is putting lobelia down the cow's throat."

Fel and I screamed, and Tempy Ann had to come in and soothe us. Fel wasn't willing her father and mother should go; but I said, "Don't you be afraid; aunt Persis won't boil 'em; they're too big to get into the kettle."

Tempy Ann laughed in her shaky way — which always made me provoked.

"Tempy Ann," cried I, jumping over the foot-board, "I guess *you* wouldn't laugh if *you* should be doubled up, and put over the stove! You needn't think Fel and I are babies, and don' know what you said about her boiling her mother up the chimney, with a jug on her nose; but we do know, and it's so, and sober true, for we've seen the kettle."

But it wasn't of the least use to reason with Tempy Ann when she had one of those shaky spells. So silly as she was at such times, I almost wished she could be boiled half a minute, to see if it wouldn't sober her down.

It seems aunt Persis had really become very crazy indeed; and that dear, sweet,

patient, good Martha had been trying to keep it a secret; but it couldn't be done any longer. She acted so badly that Martha couldn't manage her. When Squire Allen went into the house, she was stirring "Number Six" into some corn-meal for the hens, and was very angry with him because he made her leave off and go to bed.

Father and mother had to take care of her till uncle John came; but she was as sick as she was crazy, and did not live till October.

I remember looking at her beautiful, white face, the first I ever saw in death, and thinking, —

"How glad auntie is to be so still."

No one told me she was tired, but somehow I knew it, for she was always flying about in such a hurry, and I was sure it

must rest her very much to go to sleep. I received then a pleasant, peaceful impression of death, which I never forgot.

Miss Rubie staid at Squire Allen's for some time, and taught Fel. Now she is a person whom you all know very well; but I shall not tell who she is till by and by.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LITTLE LIE-GIRL.

And now I will skip along to the next summer, and come to the dreadful lie I told about the hatchet. You remember it, Horace and Prudy, how I saw your uncle Ned's hatchet on the meat block, and heedlessly took it up to break open some clams, and then was so frightened that I dared not tell how I cut my foot. "O, mamma," said I, "my foot slipped, and I fell and hit me on something; I don't know whether 'twas a hatchet or a stick of wood; but I never touched the hatchet."

It was very absurd. I think I did not

know clearly what I was saying; but after I had once said it, I supposed it would not do to take it back, but kept repeating it, "No, mamma, I never touched the hatchet."

Mother was grieved to hear me tell such a wrong story, but it was no time to reason with me then, for before my boot could be drawn off I had fainted away. When I came to myself, and saw Dr. Foster was there, it was as much as they could do to keep me on the bed. I was dreadfully afraid of that man. I thought I had deceived mother, but I knew I couldn't deceive him.

"So, so, little girl, you thought you'd make me a good job while you were about it. There's no half-way work about you," said he. And then he laughed in a way that rasped across my feelings like the noise of sharpening a slate pencil, and said I

mustn't be allowed to move my foot for days and days.

Every morning when he came, he asked, with that dreadful smile, —

"Let us see: how is it we cut our foot?"

And I answered, blushing with all my might, "Just the same as I did in the first place, you know, sir."

Upon which he would show all his white teeth, and say, —

"Well, stick to it, my dear; you remember the old saying, 'A lie well stuck to is better than the truth wavering.'"

I did not understand that, but I knew he was making fun of me. I understood what Ned meant; for he said flatly, "You've told a bouncer, miss."

I was so glad Gust Allen wasn't in town; he was a worse tease than Ned.

When Abner came in to bring me apples or cherries, he always asked, —

"Any news from the hatchet, Maggie?" And then chucked me under the chin, adding, "You're a steam-tug for telling wrong stories. Didn't know how smart you were before."

Miss Rubie said nothing; she came in with Fel every day; but I presumed she was thinking over that solemn text, "Thou, God, seest me."

'Ria did not say anything either; but I always felt as if she was just going to say something, and dreaded to have her bring in my dinner.

I knew that father "looked straight through my face down to the lie;" but I still thought that mother believed in me. One day I found out my mistake. Ned had been saying some pretty cutting things,

and I appealed to her, as she came into the room: —

"Mayn't Ned stop plaguing me, mamma?"

"No more of that, Edward," said mother, looking displeased. "It is too serious a subject for jokes. If Margaret has told us a wrong story, she is, of course, very unhappy. Do not add to her distress, my son. We keep hoping every day to hear her confess the truth; she may be sure there is nothing that would make us all so glad."

So mother knew! She must have known all along! She turned to bring me my dolly from the table, and I saw her eyes were red. I wanted to throw myself on her neck and confess; but there was Ned, and somehow I never saw mother alone after that when I could make it convenient.

She was right in thinking me unhappy,

but she little dreamed how wretched I was. Horace and Prudy, you have heard something of this before; but I must tell it now to Dotty and Fly; for that hatchet affair was a sort of crisis in my life.

You know I had not always told the truth. My imagination was active, and I liked to relate wonderful stories, to make people open their eyes. It was not wrong in the first place, for I was a mere baby. The whole world was new and wonderful to me, and one thing seemed about as strange to me as another. I could not see much difference between the real and the unreal, between the "truly true" and the make believe. When I said my mamma had silk dresses, spangled with stars, I was thinking, —

"Perhaps she has. There's *sumpin* in a trunk locked up, and I *guess* it's silk dresses."

But as I grew older I learned better than to talk so. I found I must keep such wild fancies to myself, and only tell of what I knew to be true. Every time I wanted to utter a falsehood, a little voice in my soul warned me to stop.

Fly, you are old enough to know what I mean. Your eyes say so. You didn't hear that voice when you were patting round grandma's kitchen, making Ruthie's coffee-mill buzz. You were too little to hear it then. It had nothing to say to you when you stole your mamma's "skipt," and soaked it in the wash-bowl; or when you stuffed your little cheeks with 'serves without leave, or told lies, lies, lies, as often as you opened your sweet little lips.

"You don't 'member actin' so?"

O, no; it was "so *many* years ago!" But I was going to say you did all those dread-

ful things, and still you were not naughty. Nobody thinks any the worse of you to-day for all your baby-mischief. We only laugh about it, for you did not know any better. But if you were to do such things now, what *should* we say? Your soul-voice would tell you it was wrong, and it would be wrong.

My soul-voice talked to me, and I was learning to listen to it. I was not in the habit of telling lies; I had been hurried and frightened into this one, and now it seemed as if I could not stop saying it any more than a ball can stop rolling down hill.

It was dreadful. I had to lie there on mother's bed and think about it. I could not go out of doors, or even walk about the room. Fel had lain in her pretty blue chamber day after day, too sick to eat anything but broths and gruel; but then her conscience was easy. I wasn't sick, and

could have as many nice things to eat as the rest of the family; still I was wretched.

My little friends came to see me, and were very sorry for me. I was glad to be remembered; but every time I heard the door open, I trembled for fear some one was going to say "hatchet."

And when I was alone again I would turn my face so I could watch the little clock on the mantel. It ticked with a far-away, dreamy sound, like a child talking in its sleep, and somehow it had always one story to tell, and never any other; — "You've told — a lie; — you've told — a lie."

"Well," thought I, "I know it; but stop plaguing me."

There was a pretty picture on the clock door of a little girl, with her apron full of flowers. It was to this little girl that I whispered, "Well, I know it; but you stop

plaguing me." She went right on just the same,—"You've told — a lie; you've told — a lie." I turned my face to the wall to get rid of her, but always turned it back again, for there was a strange charm about that dreadful little girl. I could tell you now just how she was dressed, and which way she bent her head with the wreath of flowers on it. You have noticed the old clock in Ruth's room at grandpa's? That's the one. I never see it now but its slow tick-tock calls to mind my sad experience with the hatchet.

Days passed. I was doing my first real thinking. Up to that time I had never kept still long enough to think. It was some comfort to draw the sheet over my head, and make up faces at myself.

"You've told a lie, Mag Parlin. Just 'cause your afraid of getting scolded at for

taking the hatchet. You're a little lie-girl. They don't believe anything what you say. God don't believe anything what you say. He saw you plain as could be when you cut your foot, and heard you plain as could be when you said you never touched the hatchet. And there he is up in heaven thinking about you, and not loving you at all! How can he? He don't have many such naughty girls in his whole world. If he did, there'd come a rain and rain all day, and all night, for as much as six weeks, and drown 'em all up 'cept eight good ones, and one of 'em's Fel Allen. But 'twouldn't be you, for you're a little lie-girl, and you know it yourself."

It is idle to say that children do not suffer. I believe I never felt keener anguish than that which thrilled my young heart as

I lay on mother's bed, and quailed at the gaze of the little girl on the clock door.

Still no one seemed to remark my unhappiness, and I have never heard it alluded to since. Children keep their feelings to themselves much more than is commonly supposed, especially proud children. And of course I was not wretched all the time; I often forgot my trouble for hours together.

But it was not till long after I had left that room that I could bring my mind to confess my sin. I took it for granted I was ruined for life, and it was of no use to try to be good. I am afraid of tiring you, little Fly; but I want you to hear the little verse that grandpa taught me one evening about this time, as I sat on his knee:

"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

I see you remember it, Dotty. Is it not

sweet? "God is faithful and just." I had always before repeated my verses like a parrot, I think; but this came home to me. I wondered if my dreadful sin couldn't be washed out, so I might begin over again. I knew what confess meant; it meant to tell God you were sorry. I went right off and told him; and then I went and told father, and I found he'd been waiting all this time to forgive me. It was just wonderful! My heart danced right up. I could look people in the face again, and wasn't afraid of the girl on the clock door, and felt as peaceful and easy as if I'd never told a lie in my life — only I hated a lie so. I can't tell you how I did hate it.

"I'll never, never, never tell another as long as I breathe," whispered I to the blue

hills, and the sky, and the fields, and the river. And I knew God heard.

I suppose it is a little remarkable, Fly; but I believe this really was my last deliberate lie. Children's resolves are not always the firmest things in the world, and my parents did not know how much mine was good for. They did not dream it had been burnt into my soul with red-hot anguish.

I have always been glad, very glad, I was allowed to suffer so much, and learn something of the preciousness of truth. It is a diamond with a white light, children. There is no other gem so clear, so pure.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TANSY CHEESE.

You are not to suppose from this that I became a good girl the very next day. No, nor the day after. I ceased from the wickedness of telling lies, just as I had stopped pilfering sweetmeats. This was all; but it was certainly better than nothing.

I was soon able to play once more, only I could not run as fast as usual. How pleasant it was out of doors, after my long stay in the house! The flowers and trees seeemed glad to see me, and I knew the hens and cows were, and old

SQUEEZING HERDSGRASS. Page 125.

Deacon Pettibone, the horse. I resumed my old business of hunting hens' nests, though it was some weeks before I dared jump off the scaffold, and it seemed odd enough to come down on the ladder.

"I'd twice rather have it be you that had cut your foot, Fel Allen," said I, "for you don't want to run and jump; and folks that don't want to, might just as well have a lame foot as not."

Fel couldn't quite understand that, though it was as clear to *me* as A B C. And after all my suffering, she wouldn't own I was as "delicate" as she. I didn't like that.

"You don't remember how many bad things have happened to me," said I, waving my thimble-finger, which had lost its tip and in the corn-sheller.

"Well, Ned's going to give you a go[illegible]

thimble to pay for that, and I suppose you're glad it's cut off," said Fel, who had never met with an accident in her life, and was naturally ashamed of not having a single scar or bruise on her little white body, not so much as a wart or pimple to show me. I could not help feeling my superiority sometimes, for I had been cut and burnt, and smashed and scalded, and bore the marks of it, too.

"Well, but you don't have so bad headaches as me," said Fel, recovering her self-esteem. "Your mamma never has to put mustard *pace* on your feet, and squeeze up burdock leaves and tie 'em on your head, now, does she?"

"I don' know but she did when I was a baby; I never heard her say," returned I, coolly. "Folks don't think much of headaches. Polly Whiting has 'em so she

can't but just see out of her eyes. But that isn't like hurting a place on you so bad your mother doesn't dass do it up! I guess you'd think it *was* something if you cut your foot most in two, and the doctor had to come and stick it together!"

That silenced Fel, and I had the last word, as usual.

It was already quite late in the summer. One day Fel and I were snuggled in the three-cornered seat in the trees, trying to squeeze herdsgrass, to see which would be married first, when Ruthie came out at the side door to sweep off the steps.

"Maggie 'll be pleased," said she; "but how we shall miss her little mill-clapper of a tongue."

She was talking to 'Ria, who was going back and forth, doing something in the kitchen.

"Yes, we shall miss her," said 'Ria; "but I shan't have her dresses to mend. I pity poor cousin Lydia; she'll think — "

Then 'Ria's voice sounded farther off, and I did not hear what cousin Lydia would think.

"Put your head down here, Fel Allen. I've found out something," whispered I, starting suddenly, and tearing my "tyer" on a nail.

"I'm going to cousin Lydia Tenney's."

"How do you know?"

"Why, didn't you hear 'Ria say she shouldn't have to mend my dresses? That means I shan't be here, of course."

"Perhaps it means you'll be a better girl, and not tear 'em."

"O, no, it don't. 'Ria knows better 'n that. Didn't you hear her say she pitied poor cousin Lydia? Well, it's because

she'll have *me* in her house; and that's why 'Ria pities her."

"Then I wouldn't go to her house, if 'twill make her feel bad," said Fel.

"O, I know what makes you say that; its because you don't want me to go."

"Of course I don't. Who'd I have to play with?"

"Lize Jane Bean."

"H'm."

"Well, then, there's Dunie Foster; you think she's a great deal nicer 'n me."

"Now, Madge Parlin, I only said she kept her hair smoother; that's all I said."

"Well, there's Abby Gray and Sallie Gordon," added I, well pleased to watch the drooping of my little friend's mouth. "You can play with them while I'm gone.

And there's your own brother Gust, that *you* think 's so much politer 'n Ned."

"You know there's nobody I like to play with so well as I do you," said Fel, laying her cheek against mine, and we sat a while, thinking how dearly we did love each other. Then we saw Abner wheeling the chaise out of the barn. I ran down the steps from the tree, and asked, —

"Is anybody going anywhere, Abner?"

"Well, yes; I believe your pa's going over yonder," said he, pointing off to the hills.

"Anybody — anybody going with him?"

"He talks of taking the Deacon," said Abner, dryly, as he began to wrench off the wheels, and grease them.

"Madge, Madge, where are you?" called

'Ria, from the side door. "Come into the house; I have something to tell you."

It was just as I expected. I was going to Bloomingdale to-morrow. The news had been kept from me till the last possible moment, for when I was excited about anything, I was noisier than ever, and as Ruthie said, "stirred up the house dreadfully."

Next morning father tucked me into the chaise, behind old Deacon. I didn't know why it was, but I couldn't help thinking about the hatchet, and wondering mother should have taken so much pains to get such a naughty girl ready. I had been told I might stay till after apple-gathering, and I was glad, for I wanted to make Fel as lonesome as she had made me those two weeks she spent in Boston. I had never been away from home but twice to

stay over night, and my playmates couldn't any of them know my true value, of course.

But as I looked at the dear friends on the piazza, growing dearer every minute, especially mother, I had my doubts whether I cared much about cousin Lydia's apples.

"She'll be back with father," remarked Ned, "as homesick as a kitten."

"Just you see if I do!"

It was well we were driving away just then, for my brave laugh came very near ending in a sob.

"I'm on business," said father, whipping up the Deacon, "and shall come back to-morrow; but you can do as you please, Totty-wax — you can come with me, or wait a month or six weeks, and come with cousin Lydia."

I was disposing, privately, of a stray tear, and could not answer.

"Your cousin will take the cars," said he.

"Take the cars!" I slipped off the seat, and stood upright in my surprise. The railroad had only just been laid to one corner of Willowbrook, and I had never taken a car in my life; had never seen one; didn't even know how it looked. This had been a great mortificatton to me ever since Fel went to Boston.

"O, father," cried I, whirling round and getting caught in the reins, "did you say the cars? I s'posed cousin Lydia would come in a wagon, and I didn't know 's I cared about staying. *Did* you say the cars?"

"There, there; don't fall out over the Deacon's back. Did you ever hear what the water-wagtail said?"

Then I knew father was laughing at me.

When I was so happy I couldn't keep still, he often asked me if I ever heard what a small bird, called the water-wagtail, said, who thought the world was made for him: —

"'Twas for my accommodation
Nature rose when I was born;
Should I die, the whole creation
Back to nothing would return."

That was what the little bird said. But father was mistaken this time. I felt remarkably humble for me. I had been thinking so much about the hatchet that I couldn't have a very high opinion of myself, to save my life.

It was twenty miles to cousin Lydia's. When we got there she was looking for us. I knew her very well, but had never been at her house before. It was a pretty white cottage, with woodbines creeping over it, and

Boston pinks growing by the front door-stone. There was a red barn and barnyard on one side of the house, and a woodshed on the other; and in front of the porch door, facing the street, was a well, with an old oaken bucket, hanging on a pole. I had never seen a well-sweep before, and supposed it must be far nicer than a pump.

Cousin Lydia had a farmer husband in a striped frock, and a beautiful old mother in a black dress and double-frilled cap. Then there were her husband's two sisters, who lived with her, and a cat and a dog; but not a child to be seen.

I didn't feel quite clear in my mind about staying; but cousin Lydia seemed to expect I would, and showed me a little cheese-hoop, about as big round as a dinner-plate, saying she would press a cheese in it on purpose for me, and I might pick pigweed to "green"

it, and tansy to give it a fine taste. So I should almost make the cheese myself; what would my mother say to that? Then there were the beehives, which were filling with honey, and some late chickens, which were going to chip out of the shell in a week. Remarkable events, every one; but it was the tansy cheese which decided me at last, and I told father he might go without me; I wanted to stay and make a visit.

It was not till he was fairly out of sight that I remembered what a long visit it would be. Why, I shouldn't see mother for as much as a month! A new and dreadful feeling swept over me, as if I was left all alone in the great empty world, with nothing to comfort me as long as I lived.

Samantha, one of Mr. Tenney's sisters, found me an hour afterwards sitting beside a chicken-coop, crying into my apron. She

asked me if I was homesick. I thought not; I only wanted to see my mother, and I felt bad "right here," laying my hand on the pit of my stomach. The feeling was not to be described, but I did not know homesickness was the name for it.

Samantha consoled me as well as she could with colored beads to string, and a barrel of kittens out in the barn. I felt a little better at dinner time, for the dinner was very nice; but my spirits were still low.

Julia, the other young lady, was not very fond of little girls, and had no box of trinkets as Samantha had, or, at any rate, did not show any to me. She seemed to be always talking privacy with her sister, or with cousin Lydia, and always sending me out of the room: Not that she ever told me, in so many words, to go away — but just as if I didn't know what she meant!

"Don't you want to go out in the barn and hunt for eggs?" said she.

No, I certainly didn't. If I had wanted to I should have found it out without her speaking of it. But I was only a little girl; so I had to go, and couldn't answer back. The neighbors' children were few and far between; and though I strolled about for hours behind cousin Joseph Tenney and the hired man, there were times when I liked to see what was going on in the kitchen, and it was vexing to hear Julia say, —

"If I was a little girl about your age, I never should get tired of looking at that speckled bossy out in the barn."

Indeed! I almost wished she had to be fastened into the stall a while, just to *see* if she wouldn't get tired of that speckled bossy.

But when the time came to make my

cheese, I had a right to stay in the house. Cousin Lydia let me look on, and see it all done. First, I picked the pigweed and tansy, or how could she have made the cheese? Then she strained some milk into a pan, and squeezed the green juices through a thin cloth. After that she put in a little rennet with a spoon.

"There," said she, "isn't that a pretty color? Watch it a few minutes, and you will see it grow thick, like blanc-mange, and that will be curd."

Then she made some white curd in another pan, without any green juice. After the curd "came," it was very interesting to cross it off with a pudding-stick, and this she let me do myself. Next morning she drained the curd in a cloth over a cheese-basket, and put on a stone to press out the whey. When

it was drained dry enough, she let me cut it up in the chopping-tray, and she mixed the two curds together, the green and the white, salted them, and put them in that cunning hoop, and then set the hoop in the cheese-press, turned a crank, and weighed it down with a flatiron. There, that is the way to make a cheese. When it came out of the press it was a perfect little beauty, white, with irregular spots of green, like the streaks in marble cake. I knew then how that greedy Harry felt, in the story, when his mother sent him a plum cake, and he couldn't wait for a knife, but "gnawed it like a little dog."

Of course I did not gnaw the cheese, but I did want to have it cut open, to see if it tasted like any other I ever ate. But cousin Lydia covered it with tissue paper, and oiled

it, and set it in a safe, and every day she oiled it again, and turned it. I would have spent half my time looking at it, only she said I must not open the dairy-room door to let the flies in.

CHAPTER IX.

"WAXERATION."

STILL, in spite of cheeses, beehives, bossies, and kittens, I had many lonesome hours, and sometimes cried after I went to bed. Samantha must have known it, for I slept with her; I was afraid to sleep alone.

There were times when I thought I would start off secretly, and go home on foot. I asked the hired man how long he supposed it would take a little girl to walk to Willowbrook, and what were the chances of her getting lost if she should try it? I thought I spoke in such a guarded way that Seth would not have the least idea what I meant;

but he must have been very quick-witted, for he understood in a minute. He did not let me know it, though, and only answered coolly, —

"Wal, I should think now it would take her about a week's steady travel, and no knowing but she'd starve to death on the road. Why, *you* hain't heerd of a little gal that thinks of such a thing, I hope?"

"No; I don't see many little girls," said I, with a dismal sigh; "they don't have anything here but bossies and horses."

I did not know, till Seth nipped it in the bud, what a sweet hope I had been cherishing. Should I truly starve to death if I took my little cheese in a basket on my arm, and some doughnuts and turn-overs? But no, it would be stealing to take things out of cousin Lydia's cupboard, and run off with

them. I would rather stay at Bloomingdale and suffer, than be a thief.

I know now that Seth told cousin Lydia what I said to him, and her kind heart was touched. I am sure she must have had a hard time with me, for she knew nothing about children, and was as busy as she could be with her dairy and her "fall work." I ought not to have been so unhappy. Some children at that age, with so much done for their amusement, would have felt perfectly contented; but I had naturally a restless disposition, and wanted, as Ned said, "sumpin diffunt."

Ah, Horace! very gallant in you to say I have "got bravely over it." Thank you, dear; I hope I have, to some degree; still I might have got over it much younger if I had only tried a little harder. A child of seven is old enough to be grateful to its

friends, when they do all they can for its comfort and pleasure.

Cousin Lydia wrote mother about my state of mind; and it troubled her. She talked with Madam Allen, who was always full of plans. Madam thought a minute, and then said, —

"Poor Marjie, we can't have her homesick. Do you suppose she would like to have Ruphelle go there and stay with her?"

Of course mother knew I would be happy with Ruphelle.

Then Madam Allen wished mother would please write cousin Lydia, and ask if Fel might go to Bloomingdale a few weeks. She hoped the mountain air would be strengthening to the dear little girl, who seemed rather drooping.

Cousin Lydia was willing; and Madam Allen sent Ruphelle by cars, with a gentle-

man and lady who were going to Boston. Not a word was said to me; and when Seth harnessed the horse and went to the station to meet her, I supposed he was only "going to see his mother;" for that was what he always said when I asked any questions. It was about three miles to the flag station, and I believe his mother lived somewhere on the way.

I was not watching for him to come back, or thinking anything about him, when I happened to look out of the window and see him helping a little girl out of the wagon. The red and white plaid looked exactly like Fel's dress; and as the little girl turned around, there were the soft, brown eyes, and the dark, wavy hair, and the lovely pale face of Fel Allen herself!

I never expect to be much happier till I get to heaven than I was for the next hour

or two. I danced and screamed, and laughed and cried, and wondered how Fel could keep so calm, when we hadn't seen each other for as much as three weeks.

"I don't see what's the matter with me," sobbed I; "I never was so glad in my life; but I can't help a-crying!"

Fel was not one of the kind to go wild. She usually knew what she was about. Supper was ready, and she sat at the table, and ate honey on her bread and butter, as if she really enjoyed it; also answered every one of cousin Lydia's many questions like a little lady.

I had no appetite, and could hardly have told what my name was if any one had asked me.

But from that time my homesickness was gone. I took my little friend all about the farm, which was a very nice place, only I

had never thought of it before, and showed her the speckled bossy, which seemed to have grown handsomer all in one night.

"Here are some black currants, Fel; do you like 'em?"

"O, yes."

"Why, I don't; I just despise 'em."

"Well, I don't like 'em *very* well," said Fel; for after our long separation she could not bear to disagree with me in anything.

"Cousin Lydia," said I, very soon after Fel came, "may we tell scare stories after we go to bed? She wants us to."

Cousin Lydia did not know what I meant by "scare stories."

"It's all the awful things we can think of," said I, eagerly. "And we like to, for we want to see 'f our hair 'll stand out straight."

Cousin Lydia laughed, and said "children were perfect curiosities."

"It makes us shiver all over. It's splendid," said I.

"Well, you may try it this once," said cousin Lydia, "if you'll stop talking the moment I tap on the wall."

So, as soon as we got into bed we began. "You tell first," said Ruphelle; "you can tell the orfulest, and then I'll tell."

"Mine'll be about the Big Giant," said I, clearing my throat.

"*The Big Giant.*

"Once upon a time he had three heads, and he roared so you could hear him a mile."

"That isn't anything," said Fel; "my hair don't stand out a bit."

"Why, I hadn't but just begun. You wait and see what comes next. Did I say the Big Giant had three heads? He

had sixteen. And every one of 'em had three mouths, and some had ten; and they made a noise when he chewed grass like —— like thunder."

"It don't scare me a bit," said Fel, stoutly.

"Did I say the Big Giant ate grass? He ate *fire;* he ate live coals, the *liver* the better."

"I should have thought 'twould have burnt him all up," said Fel.

"There, miss, you needn't pretend not to be scared! I'm so scared myself I can't but just tell! — No, it didn't burn him up; it came out at his great big nose. And when the Big Giant walked along the streets folks ran away, for he blazed so. And there wasn't enough water in Willowbrook to put him out!"

"He didn't live at Willowbrook?"

"O, yes, right between your house and my house; *and lives there now!*"

By that time Fel began to tremble and creep closer to me.

"Tell some more," said she, laughing. "It don't scare me a bit."

And I told, and I told. There was no end to the horrible things that Big Giant had done, was doing, or was going to do.

"Does your hair stand up, Fel?"

"No; feel and see if it does. But there's a creepy feeling goes over me; don't it over you?"

"Yes," said I, highly excited. "Got your eyes shut, Fel?"

"Yes, shut up tight."

"Open 'em," said I, solemnly; "for how do you know but that Big Giant's got into this room? Can't you *see* the fire coming out of his nose?"

Fell couldn't, exactly.

"Get out," said I, "and get the wash-bowl and pitcher, and let's throw it at him kersplash."

"I dassent," said Fel, faintly.

"Nor I dassent neither."

By that time I was out of bed, much more frightened than Fel was, and calling "Cousin Lydia," as loud as I could shout. She came in in great surprise, and it was some time before she could succeed in calming us. I remember how heartily she laughed, and how my teeth chattered. I actually had to be wrapped in a blanket and dosed with ginger tea. I wonder how many times cousin Lydia said, —

"Well, children ARE perfect curiosities."

We could not think of such a thing as spending the night alone after all this, and

Samantha was obliged to get into our bed and sleep in the middle. Cousin Lydia said we made too much hard work for the family by telling "scare stories," and we must not do it again while we staid at her house.

"I have just found out, Marjie, why it is that you are afraid to sleep alone," said she; "it is because you allow yourself to think about such frightful things. Is it not so?"

"Yes'm," said I, quivering in the blanket.

"Well, child, you must stop it at once; it is a very foolish habit, and may grow upon you. Never think of dreadful things. Say your little prayer, asking God to take care of you, and then lie down in peace, for he will certainly do it. Ruphelle, are you ever afraid?"

"No'm, only when I'm with Marjie;

but I like to hear her tell things; I ask her to."

Fel often said she had beautiful thoughts about angels after she went to bed, and dreamed that they came and stood by her pillow.

Ah, that was no common child; she lived very near the gates of heaven. Strange I could have associated with her so much, and still have been so full of wrong desires and naughty actions!

Julia Tenney, who was not very fond of children, certainly not of me, took a decided fancy to Fel the moment she saw her. I soon found this out, for she did not try to conceal it, and said more than once that "that child was too good for this world." I thought everybody liked her better than me, from Miss Julia down to the cat. I did not consider this at all

strange; only I longed to do something to show myself worthy of praise, as well as she.

There was a panic at that time about small-pox, and the doctor came one day to vaccinate everybody in the house. We children looked on with great interest to see the lancet make a scratch in cousin Lydia's arm, and then in Miss Samantha's, and Miss Julia's.

"Now for the little folks," said the doctor, and drew Fel along to him; but she broke away in great alarm, and began to cry. "Well, well," said the doctor, turning to me, "here's a little lady that will come right up, I know she will; *she* won't mind such a thing as a prick of a needle."

No, I really didn't mind it; why should I, when I had been gashed and slashed all my life? So I walked up very quickly

to show my courage. I guessed they wouldn't laugh about my Big Giant now! I rolled back my sleeve with an air of triumph, and looked down on Fel, who shrank into a corner. Everybody was surprised, and said, "Well done!" and hoped I wasn't *all* the brave child there was in the house.

I walked on thrones, I assure you; for there was Fel crying, and begging to wait till after dinner. Why, she hadn't any more courage than a chicken. I was ashamed of her. The doctor said he would wait till after dinner if she would surely have it done then.

"O, you little scare-girl!" said I, as he walked out to talk with cousin Joseph, and we two children were left alone in the room.

The doctor had laid his lancet and the little quill of vaccine matter on the table,

having no thought, I suppose, that such small children as we would dare touch them.

"I can waxerate as well as he can," said I, taking up the lancet, "for I watched him. Push up your sleeve, Fel, and I'll waxerate you, and then when the doctor does it, you'll get used to it, you know."

"Don't you, *don't* you touch that sharp thing, Madge Parlin."

"Poh! do you think I'm a little scare-girl like you?" returned I, proudly, for my little head was quite turned with flattery. "He didn't say folks musn't touch it, did he, Miss Fel? It's just like a needle; and who's afraid of a needle but you? I'll waxerate *me*, if *you* don't dast. Just you look! When I've done it three times to me, will you let me do it to you?"

Fel wouldn't promise, but I went boldly to work. Let me count the scars — yes, twenty scratches I made above my elbow, never forgetting the vaccine, saying, as I stopped to take breath, —

"Ready now, Fel?"

She never was ready, but she stood looking on with such meekness and awe, that I was just as well satisfied. After the doctor was gone, and she was in cousin Lydia's lap, quite overcome by the fright of "waxeration," I told what I had done, expecting to be praised.

"Why, Maggie!" said cousin Lydia, really shocked, "what will you do next? It was very, very wrong for you to meddle with the doctor's lancet."

"Ah, well," said Miss Julia, "I guess she'll be a sick enough child when it 'takes.'"

I did not understand that, but I saw I had sunk again in everybody's esteem. And that very afternoon Miss Julia allowed Fel, who had been such a coward, to dress up in her bracelets, rings, pin, and even her gold watch, only "she must be sure and not let Maggie touch them."

Of course I see now what a heedless child I was, and don't wonder Miss Julia wished to preserve her ornaments from my fingers; still she ought not to have given them to Fel before my very eyes. I thought it was hard, after scratching myself so unmercifully, not to have either glory or kisses, or even a bosom-pin to wear half an hour. My arm smarted, and I felt cross. As Miss Julia went out of the room she patted Fel's head, but took no notice of me, and cousin Lydia did the

very same thing two minutes afterwards. It was more than I could bear.

"Ho, little *borrow-girl*," said I to Fel, "got a gold watch, too! 'Fore I'd wear other folks's things! I don't wear a single one thing on me but b'longs to me; you may count 'em and see!"

It seemed as if I could not let her alone; but such was the sweetness of nature in that dear little girl that she loved me through everything.

"I thought you wanted to go out doors and play with me," said I; "and if you do, you'd better take off your borrowed watch!"

Fel did not answer, but tucked the watch into her bosom; and we went out in no very pleasant mood.

CHAPTER X.

"THE CHILD'S ALIVE."*

SAMANTHA and Julia were gone to a neighbor's that afternoon, and cousin Lydia was filling a husk-bed in the barn. There was no one at home but lame and half-blind grandma Tenney.

"I don't care if they are gone, for they all think I'm a naughty, bad girl," thought I. "O, why don't they love me? My mamma loves me, and hugs me every day when I'm home."

I walked along to the well, my eyes half-blinded by tears. That well-sweep had al-

* The following is a true incident.

ways fascinated me, and I had been allowed to play with it freely; but lately cousin Joseph had observed that the curb, or framework round the mouth of the well, was out of order; the boards were old, and the nails were loosened; he should put on new boards as soon as he could stop; but until he did so, I must let it alone. Would I remember?"

"Yes, sir," said I, at the same time thinking in this wise: "Why, I drawed water day before yes'day, and he didn't say the boards were old. How could they grow old in one day?"

Still I fully intended to obey. I forgot myself when I said, —

"Fel, le's do a washing, and wash our dollies' clo'es. I'll go get a little tinpail to draw water with."

For I could not lift the bucket.

"Well," said she; "and I'll go get a cake o' soap."

She had heard nothing about the well-curb, and did not know we were doing wrong to draw water. She enjoyed swinging the pole just as much as I did, and we soon forgot our slight disagreement as we watched the little pail drop slowly into the well.

"There are stars down there," said I, "for I saw 'em once; they say it's stars, but I shouldn't wonder if 'twas pieces of gold — should you?"

I was letting the pail down as I spoke, and Fel was leaning against the curb, peeping into the well.

"O, I forgot," cried I; "cousin Joseph said —"

But even before I had finished the sen-

tence, the rotten boards gave way, and Fel pitched suddenly forward into the well!

My brain reeled; but next moment my reason — all I ever had and more too — came to my aid. I can't account for it, but I felt as strong and brave as a little woman, and called out, —

"Take hold of the pole, Fel! take hold of the pole!"

I don't know whether she heard me or not, for her screams were coming up hoarse and hollow from the watery depths. All I know is, she did put out both her little hands, and clutch that short pole. The ten-quart pail was dangling from the end of the pole, within two feet of the water.

What was I to do? I could draw up the little tin pail, but not such a heavy weight as Fel. My hope was that I might keep her above water a while, and as long as I could,

of course she would not drown. It was a wise thought, and showed great presence of mind in a child of my age. I am glad I have this one redeeming fact to tell of myself — I, who ran wild at the silly story of a make-believe Big Giant!

Yes, I held up that long pole with all the might of my little arms, crying all the while to Seth in the barn, —

"Come quick! come quick!"

It was just as much as I could do. I am sure strength must have been granted me for the task. For a long while, or what seemed to me a long while, nobody heard. Seth was making a great noise with his flail, and if my shout reached his ears he only thought it child's play; but when it kept on and on, so shrill and so full of distress, he dropped his flail at last and ran.

Not a moment too soon; my little strength was giving out.

"Jethro! what's this?" cried he, and caught the pole from my hand. "Well, you're a good one! Don't be scared, little dear." That was to Fel. "Hold on tight, and I'll fetch you up in a jiffy."

She did hold on; stupefied as she was, she still had sense enough to cling to the pole.

"There, there, that's a lady! Both arms round my neck! Up she comes!"

By that time cousin Lydia was on the spot, looking ashy white, and Seth, with Fel in his arms, was rocking her back and forth like a baby, and saying, "There, there, little girlie, don't cry."

"The Lord be praised!" exclaimed cousin Lydia; "the child's alive! the child's alive!"

"Yes, and this Marjie here is a good one," said Seth, pointing to me; "she's got the

right stuff in her. I never saw a young one of that age do anything so complete in my life."

I cried then; it was the first time I could stop to cry. Cousin Lydia put her arms round me, and kissed me; and that kiss was sweet to my soul.

Seth carried Fel into the house. She was trembling and sobbing violently, and did not seem at first to understand much that was said to her. Cousin Lydia rubbed her, and gave her some cordial to drink, and I looked on, half proud and half ashamed. Seth kept saying there were five feet of water in the well, and if I hadn't held Fel up, she must have drowned before anybody could get to her. I knew I had been very brave, and had saved Fel's life. I knew it before Seth said so. But who drowned her in the first place? I expected every

minute cousin Lydia would ask that question; but she didn't; she never seemed to think of it.

When the young ladies came home, Miss Julia took me in her lap, and said, —

"Well, Marjery, you're a smart child; there's no doubt about it — a very smart child."

Just think of that from Miss Julia! It wouldn't have been much from Miss Samantha, for she had a soft way with her; but Miss Julia! Why, it puffed me out, and puffed me out, till there was about as much substance to me as there is to a great hollow soap-bubble.

"Yes," said cousin Joseph, in his slow way, "Marjery is smart enough, but she ought to be very smart to make up for her heedlessness."

There, he had pricked the bubble that time! I twinkled right out.

And it was the last time Julia admired me; for she happened to think just then of her gold watch. It was not on Fel's neck; it had gone into the well where the stars were. Seth got it out, but it was battered and bruised, and something had happened to the inside of it, so it wouldn't tick.

Miss Julia never took me in her lap again; but she liked Fel as well as ever. She said Fel was not at all to blame. I knew she wasn't, and somehow, after that dreadful affair, I was willing people should love Fel better than me. I had been fairly frightened out of my crossness to her. O, what if I *had* drowned her? Every time I wanted to snub her I thought of that, and stopped. I suppose I put my arms round her neck fifty times, and asked, "Do you love me *jus* the same as if I hadn't drowned you?"

And she said "Yes," every time, the precious darling!

I had a very lame arm not long after this; it almost threw me into a fever. I was ashamed to have that doctor come, for they had told me what was the matter. It has always been my luck, children, if I ever tried to show off, to get nicely paid for it!

Now I think of it, Dotty, how easily Fel could have turned upon me at this time, and said, "Ho, little meddle-girl! Got a sore arm, too!"

But you may be sure she never thought of such a thing. It grieved her to see me lie in bed, and toss about with pain. She sat beside me, and patted my cheeks with her little, soft hands, and sometimes read to me, from a Sabbath school book, about a good girl, named Mary Lothrop, — she would read as well as most grown people,

for she really was a remarkable child, — but I didn't like to hear about Mary Lothrop, and begged her to stop.

"She's too tremendous good," said I. "It killed her to be so good, and I'm afraid — "

I believe I never told Fel what I was afraid of; but it was, that she was "too tremendous good" herself, and would "die little," as Mary Lothrop did. I thought she seemed like Mary; and hadn't Miss Julia said she was too good for this world? O, what if God should want her up in heaven? I had thought of this before; but if I had really believed it, I should all along have treated her very differently. We should none of us speak unkindly if we believed our friends were soon going away from us, out of this world. What would I give now if I had never called the tears into that child's gentle eyes!

My arm got well, and the next thing that happened was a letter from home — to us two little chickens, Fel and me both. Seth brought it from the "post-ovviz," directed to Miss Ruphelle Allen and Miss Margaret Parlin, care of Joseph Tenney, Esq. Here it lies in my writing-desk, almost as yellow as gold, and quite as precious. How many times do you suppose we little girls read it and kissed it? How many times do you suppose we went to sleep with it under our pillows? We took turns doing that, and thought it brought us pleasant dreams.

Her mother wrote one page of the letter, and my mother another; 'Ria a few lines, and Ned these words, in a round hand: —

"Dear Sister: I suppose you want to hear all about our house and barn. I went to Gus Allen's party. We trained, and a pretty set of fellows we were."

That was all he told about our house and barn, and he did not sign his name. Perhaps he would have said more after resting a while; but Miss Rubie saved him the trouble, and ended the letter, by inviting "you darlings," — Fel and me, — to her wedding, which was to take place in a few weeks.

We had a little waltzing to do then! A wedding! We danced right and left, with that letter under our feet.

"I should think you'd better read on, and see what the man's name is, you little Flutterbudgets," said cousin Joseph, laughing at us.

We hadn't thought of that. We looked, and found it was uncle John! Another surprise. It was a new idea to both of us, that a man who had had one wife should ever have another. We remembered aunt Persis, who wanted to steam Fel.

"And she died years, and years, and *years* ago."

"About eleven months," said cousin Lydia. Your uncle John is obliged to go to England this fall, and wants to take Zed; and I am very glad Miss Rubie is willing to be Zed's mother, and will go with them."

"How can she be his mother?" said I. "She's his auntie."

But we didn't care about the relationship, Fel and I; all we cared about was the wedding. And I did hope I should have a string of wax beads to wear on my neck.

Here is our reply to the letter. (The words in Italics are Fel's.)

"Dear little Mothers: We thought we would write to you. *We are glad we shall go to the wedding.* Do you think you can buy me some wax beeds? *We want*

to see you very much. But I want the wax beeds, too. Fel said a prayer for my sickness. I think she is a very pias girl. The cow is dead, &c., & ect. So good by.

"From Maj and Ruphelle."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST CAR RIDE.

It seemed as if cousin Lydia never would get ready to start. Ever since the letter from our mammas, Fel and I had been sure we were wanted at home; but there was no end to the things cousin Lydia had to do, and so far as we could see, Miss Samantha and Miss Julia didn't help her much. We dared not say this, however; we laid it away in our minds, with twenty other things we meant to tell our mothers when we got home.

My great consolation while waiting was a Maltese kitten with white toes, and eyes

the color of blue clay; and when, at last, the joyful time came for going to Willowbrook, I begged to take that kitty with us. Miss Julia said, "Nonsense!" But cousin Lydia was really a sensible woman; for what did she do but butter Silvertoe's paws, and tie her into an egg-basket.

"But you must take care of her yourself, Maggie; I shall have my hands full with you, and Ruphelle, and the baggage."

Kitty behaved beautifully at first; but presently the rough mountain roads began to jar upon her nerves, I think; for by the time the stage reached the station, she was scratching and mewing at such a rate that I was ashamed of her. I lagged behind, so cousin shouldn't hear.

And was this the depot? A jail, I should say. Such a wicked man staring through

the hole in the wall! Wonder what he was put in for?

"The ticket-master, that is," said cousin Lydia, smiling at me, though I hoped she couldn't see what I had been thinking.

Then she bought the tickets; but she wouldn't let Fel or me keep ours. She said the kitty was all I could manage. So I should think!

We heard a shriek like my Big Giant. It frightened me dreadfully; I began to think there *was* such a man. No wonder kitty jumped. Next moment some yellow things came tearing along. Then I knew it was the cars.

"Come," said cousin Lydia, climbing the steps.

Well, I intended to come. My foot was just a little stiff, but I was hurrying as fast as I could, when up sprang the cover of

the basket, and out popped the kitty. Of course, I wasn't going without Silvertoes. She scampered round the end of the depot, and I ran after her. It was of no use; she dropped into a hole. I couldn't have been gone half a minute; but those yellow things took that time to whisk off. I ran the whole length of the platform, calling, "Whoa!" but they never stopped.

The black-whiskered man had come out of his cell, and was locking the depot door.

"O, won't you stop that railroad? Please, for pity's sake!"

The man made no reply; only shut one eye and whistled. I danced and screamed. There were those things puffing out of breath, and determined not to stop.

"'Tain't no use to make a rumpus. The cars won't take back tracks for nobody."

I thought he didn't understand.

"Why, my cousin Lydia bought me a ticket, sir, right out of that hole. Don't you *know* she did? And that railroad went off and left me. I was getting in in a minute, as soon as I found my kitty!"

"O, that's it, hey? Well, you see this ere's only a flag-station, and they don't stop for cats."

I began to cry. The man patted me on the back, just as if I had a fish-bone in my throat, and called me "Poor sissy." It made me very angry — seven *whole* years old — to be called sissy! I wiped my eyes at once, and told him decidedly that I thought my cousin would make the "driver" come back for me.

The man whistled harder. This caused me to feel a little like a dog that has lost his master; and I felt so all the more when

the man pointed his finger at me and told me to follow him, and he would try to get me "put up" for the night. But not knowing anything better to do, I trudged after him with my empty basket, forgetting all about the kitten.

We crossed the road, and went through a long yard where clothes were drying, till we came to a little brown house. Near the open door of the porch sat a woman beating eggs in a yellow pudding-dish. She had a skin somewhat the color of leather, and wore a leather-colored dress, gold beads, a brass-topped comb, and gold ear-drops, like upside down exclamation points. I thought she looked a little like a sheepskin book father had in a gilt binding.

"This little creeter got left by the train, Harr'et; I don't see but we shall have to eat and sleep her. What say?"

"Eat and sleep me!" I took a step backward. Of course they did not mean what they said; but I thought joking on this occasion was in very poor taste.

"Got left over? Poor little dear!"

The woman stopped her work to pity me, and drops of egg dripped from the fork-tines like yellow tears. I fell to crying then.

"It seems she's some related to Captain Tenney's folks," said the whistling man, ending with another love-pat, and "Poor Sissy!"

But even those insulting words could not stop my crying this time.

"Leave her to me, Peter," said the woman. "Most likely she's afraid of men folks."

The man went away, to my great relief, and she took my bonnet and cloak, and then made me tell her all about my

trials, while she beat time with her fork. My mouth once open, I talked steadily, giving the complete history of my life between my sobs, — only leaving out my lie about the hatchet.

"Something cut my foot and I go a little lame, or I could have catched that kitty, — she has white *pors*. But *does* the railroad have any right to run off and leave folks that's bought tickets?"

"Never mind, dear, you're welcome to stay over with us. Brother Peter and I never calculate to turn folks away while we have a crust to eat, or a roof to cover us."

"O, dear, what poor people!" I ought not to stay. But it seemed they were to have something to-night better than crusts. Harr'et was frying pancakes, — how could she afford it? — and shaking them out of

the kettle with a long-handled skimmer into a pan in a chair. She brought me one, which she called her "try-cake;" but it didn't look like Ruth's, and I was too homesick to eat; so I managed to slip it into my pocket.

Harr'et wore heavy calfskin shoes, and shook the house fearfully when she walked. I couldn't help thinking of what she had said about the roof, and it seemed as if it might fall any minute and "cover us," sure enough.

While I sat on the door-step watching her, all forlorn, she drew out a red arm-chair, gave it a little twitch, as you would to a sunshade, and lo! it turned into a table, with a round top. Then she covered it with a cloth, from a drawer in the chair part of the table, and put on some green and white dishes.

When tea was ready, the whistling man seemed to know it, and came in. It didn't look very inviting to me. The biscuits were specked with brown spots as if the oven had freckled them; and I didn't like molasses for sauce.

I thought of home, and the nice supper cousin Lydia was eating there, and could almost see her sitting next to mother, with my purse in her pocket, and my ticket too. And I could almost see Fel, and hear her queer grandpa asking her questions, while Miss Rubie looked on, all smiling, and dressed in her wedding-gown, of course.

They all thought I was lost, and they should never see me again. Perhaps they never would. How could I go home without a ticket? Once there was a man put

off the car because he couldn't show a ticket. Fel saw the "driver" do it.

That thought choked me, together with the sudden recollection that I hadn't told Harr'et my purse was gone. She and Peter might be expecting to make quite a little sum out of my board, enough to keep the roof on a while longer.

"Do eat, child," said the man.

"I didn't tell you, sir," I sobbed, "that the railroad ran off with my purse, — cousin Lydia, I mean, — and I haven't the leastest thing to pay you with!"

I drew out my handkerchief in a great hurry, and out flew the pancake. Peter and Harriet looked at it and smiled, and I hid my face in shame.

"Never you worry your little head about money," said Peter, kindly. "I know young ladies about your size ain't in the

habit of travelling with their pockets full of rocks —— let alone doughnuts."

O, what a kind man! And how I had mistaken him! I forgave him at once for calling me poor sissy.

"If you've done your supper, Peter, I motion you take her out and show her the sheep and lambs."

Peter did so, besides beguiling me with pleasant talk; but pleasantest of all was the remark, —

"Don't be a bit concerned about your ticket; I'll make that all right to-morrow."

And this was the man I had been so afraid of, only because he was rough-looking, and liked to make jokes.

He told me his name was Peter Noble, and Harr'et was his sister, and kept house for him; and I actually told him in confidence that I meant to go to Italy when

I grew to be a lady; for we became close friends in a few minutes, and I felt that he could be trusted.

It was almost dark when we went back to the kitchen; but there was Harriet, laughing.

"Whose kitty?" said she.

And it was Silvertoes, lapping milk out of a saucer by the stove. She was very hungry, and I suppose came to that house because it was so near the depot. I felt as happy as Robinson Crusoe when he found Friday. My trials were now nearly over.

I remember little more, except Peter's taking me into a car next day in his arms, and Harriet's giving me my kitty through the window. I hope I thanked them, but am not sure. That was the last I saw of them; but I carried the marks

of Harriet's "try-cake" while my frock lasted, for soap took out the color.

The "driver" treated me with marked politeness, and when we reached Willow-brook Corner, put me into the yellow stage, with as much care as if I had been a china tea-set.

There was a shout when I got home, for all the family were at the gate.

CHAPTER XII.

BETTER THAN KITTENS.

YES, they seemed just as glad to see me as if I was the Queen of England, and had been gone all the days of my life. Father, especially, looked really overjoyed.

"How they must have missed me!" thought I, springing out of the coach and falling headlong over old Towser. "O, please catch that kitten."

Ned seized the empty basket and whirled it over his head.

"Who cares for such trash? We've got something in the house that's better than sixteen kittens."

"Rabbits?"

"Come and see," said 'Ria, giving me one hand, while she stroked Silvertoes with the other.

"O, I don't believe it's anything. Is it wax beads? You haven't asked where I came from, nor whose house I staid to. There was a woman with gold beads, and he called her Harret, and —"

"Yes, I knew they'd take good care of you," said cousin Lydia.

"And where d'you s'pose I found my kitty?" But no one seemed to hear. I had expected to be pelted with questions as to my eating, drinking, and sleeping, and to be pitied for the late distress of my mind. But no one showed the slightest curiosity; they all seemed in a great hurry to get into the house.

I stopped talking, and walked along with

all the dignity of an offended pea-chicken. There might or might not be something worth going to see; but I was resolved to keep perfectly cool. Up stairs? Well, up stairs then, or up in the attic, or out on the roof, — it made no difference to me. I could keep from asking questions as long as they could, if not longer.

O, mother's room, was it? Well, I'd been wondering all the while where mother was, only I wouldn't ask. Dear me, was she sick? "So glad to see little Madge," she said, kissing me over and over again. "And what a hard time I had had."

There, *she* knew how I'd been suffering, and was just going to ask me some questions, when that troublesome Ned whisked me right up in his arms, and whirled me round towards the fireplace.

"If you've got any eyes, Maggie, look there."

My eyes were good enough, if that was all; but what was that woman sitting there for? I thought she had a heap of woollen clothes in her lap.

Father took it.

"Come here, Totty-wax."

I put out my hands, and felt something as soft as kittens.

"Presto, change!" cried Ned, and pulled down the top of the blanket. There lay a little, wrinkled, rosy face, a baby's face, and over it was moving a little wrinkled hand.

I jumped, and then I screamed; and then I ran out of the room and back again.

"O, O, O! Stop her! Hold her!" said Ned.

But they couldn't do it. I rushed up to the baby, who cried in my face.

"What is that?" said I; and then I burst into tears.

"Your little sister," said father.

"It isn't," sobbed I, and broke out laughing.

Everybody else laughed, too.

"Say that again," said I.

"Your little sister," repeated father.

"Does Fel know it? And it *isn't* Ned's brother?" seizing father by the whiskers. "And he can't set her on the wood-pile! Came down from heaven. What 'm I crying for? Came down particular purpose for me."

"Yes, Totty-wax," said father, smiling, with a tear in the corner of his eye, —

> "'Twas for my accommodation
> Nature rose when I was born."

"Has this child had any supper?" asked mother, in a faint voice from the bed.

"No, *she* can't eat," laughed I; "her face looks like a roast apple."

"Your mother means you, Maggie. You are tired and excited," said cousin Lydia. "Ruth made cream-cakes to-night."

"But I shan't go, 'thout I can carry the baby. Ned's holding her. She isn't *his* brother. I haven't had her in my arms once. How good God was! O, dear, what teenty hands! She can't swallow 'em, on 'count of her arms. Sent particular purpose for me — father said so. 'Ria Parlin, she's nowhere near your age. You have everything, but you can't have this. She gapes. She knows how to; she's found her mouth; she's found her mouth!"

And so I ran on and on, like a brook in a freshet, and might never have stopped,

if they had not taken me out of the room, and tied me in a high chair before a table full of nice things. And Ruthie stood there with a smile in her eyes, and said if I spoke another word, I shouldn't see baby again that night.

I couldn't help pitying Ned. I wasn't sure I had treated him just right. I had prayed, off and on, as much as two or three weeks in all, that God would send me a sister, and of course that was why she had come. I didn't wish Ned to know this; he would be so sorry he hadn't thought of it himself, and prayed for a brother. I told Fel about it, and she didn't know whether it was quite fair or not. "Yes, it was. too," said I; for I never would allow Fel the last word. "It was fair; Ned's older 'n me, and ought to say his prayers a great deal more *reggurly*."

O, that wonderful new sister! For days I never tired of admiring her.

"Look, mamma! 'Ria, did you ever, ever see such blue eyes?"

And then I sat and talked to the new sister, and asked her

"Where did she get her eyes of blue?"

But she did not answer, as the baby does in the song, —

"Out of the sky, as I came through."

"What makes the light in them sparkle and spin?
Some of the starry spikes left in."

"Where did you get that pearly ear?
God spake, and it came out to hear."

Ah! If she could only have talked, wouldn't she have told some sweet stories about angels?

I couldn't have left her for anything else but that wedding; but Ruthie promised to

take good care of her — and I could trust Ruthie! Ned wasn't going; there were to be no children but Fel and me. Well, yes, Gust was there; but that was because he happened to be in the house. The wedding was in Madam Allen's parlors. *I* stood up before the minister, with wax beads on my neck, and white slippers on my feet. Somebody else stood there, too; for one wouldn't have been enough. Fel dressed just like me — in white, with the same kind of beads; only she was pale, and I wasn't, and she looked like a white rosebud, and I didn't.

We stood between the "shovin' doors," — that was what Gust called them, — and there was a bride and bridegroom, too. I nearly forgot that. I remember lights, and flowers, and wedding cake; and by and by Madam Allen came along, looking so grand

in her white turban, and gave the bride a bridal rose, but not Fel or me a single bud. Then, when people kissed the bride, I kissed her, too, and she whispered, —

"Call me aunt Martha, dear."

"O, yes, Miss Rubie," said I; "you are my cousin, aunt Martha."

For I could not understand exactly.

Uncle John hugged me, and said they were all going away in the morning, he and aunt Martha, and Zed; and then I felt sorry, even with my wax beads on, and said to father, —

"I tell you what, I love my uncle John *that was*."

No, Fly, he didn't have any horse then called "Lighting Dodger;" but it was the same uncle John, and aunt Martha is the very woman who pets you so much, and

has that pretty clock, with a pendulum in the shape of a little boy in a swing.

After that wedding there was a long winter. I went to school, but Fel didn't. She looked so white that I supposed her mother was afraid she would freeze. Miss Rubie was gone, and there were no lessons to learn; but Madam Allen didn't care for that; she said Fel was too sick to study. Whenever I didn't have to take care of the baby, I went to see her; but that baby needed a great deal of care! For the first month of her life I wanted to sit by her cradle, night and day, and not let any one else come near her. The next month I was willing Ned should have her half the time; and by the third month I cried because I had to take care of her at all.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOOD BY.

It happened that she was a cross baby. It did not take her long to forget all about heaven. She liked to pull hair, and she liked to scratch faces; and no matter how much you trotted her up and down, she just opened her toothless mouth and cried.

"She's a wicked, awful baby!" exclaimed I, scowling at her till my eyes ached.

"Div her a pill, *I* would," said Ned, laughing. He could laugh, for he didn't have to sit and hold her, as I did.

"Poor little thing isn't well," said mother.

"I don't 'spect she knows whether's she's

well or not," returned I, in disgust. "She just hates everybody, and that's what she's crying about."

"You grieve me, Madge. I thought you loved this dear sister."

"Well, I did; but I don't love her any more, and I don't ever want to rock a baby that hates me so hard she can't keep her mouth shut."

"You don't mean you are not glad God sent her? O, Madge!"

"Yes'm, that's what I mean. I'm real sorry he sent her, and I wish he'd take her back again."

Hasty, bitter speech! Even a child knows better than to talk so recklessly. Next day, and for many days, those words came back to my heart like sharp knives. Little sister was very ill, and I knew by the looks of people's faces that they thought she would cross

the dark river, on the other side of which stand the pearly gates. Mother saw me roving about the house, crying in corners, and sent me away to the Allens to stay all night. When I got there, Madam Allen took me right up in her motherly arms, and tried to soothe me; but I refused to be comforted.

"I thought baby looked a little better this morning," said she.

I shook my head.

"Has baby grown any worse?"

"No'm."

"Then why do you shake your head?"

"'Cause," sobbed I, "'cause —"

And then, hiding behind her turban, I whispered, —

"O, if you tell God you want anything, is that a prayer?"

"Yes, dear, if you tell him you want little sister to get well, that is a prayer."

I moaned still more bitterly at these words, and slid out of her lap.

"Why, what is it, darling?"

"I can't tell you," said I; "I can't, I can't. There isn't anybody in this world I can tell but just Fel."

Then Madam Allen went out of the room, and left us two little girls alone.

"O, Fel," said I, as soon as my sobs would let me speak, "I said I wished God would take my little sister back again."

Fel looked very much shocked.

"And O, I'm afraid it was a truly prayer, and God 'll do it."

"No, I guess it wasn't a truly prayer, Madge."

"What makes you think it wasn't?" cried I, eagerly, for I supposed she must know.

"Wasn't you mad when you said it?"

"Yes, very. She made that long scratch on my nose, and I was very mad."

"She did dig awful deep; I don't wonder you felt bad," said Fel, soothingly. "But you didn't want her to die, any more'n anything; now did you?"

"No, O, no!"

"Well, then, if you didn't want her to die, God knows you didn't; for he knows everything, don't he?"

"Yes, yes."

"And so it wasn't a ruly prayer," added Fel, positively.

"And won't he answer it?"

"Why, what you 'spose? Of course not, Madge."

She seemed to feel so clear upon the subject, that I began to breathe more

freely. O, it was everything to have such a wise little friend!

"But I oughtn't to said it, Fel! O, dear! What s'pose made me? *You* never say bad things, never!"

Fel thought a moment, and then answered, as she looked at me with her clear, happy eyes, —

"Well, you have lots of things to plague you, Madge; but I don't. Everybody's real good to me, because I'm sick."

I looked at her, and began to cry again. My little heart had been stirred to its very depths, and I could not bear to have her speak of being sick.

"Now, Fel Allen," said I, "you don't s'pose you're going to die 'fore I do? I can't live 'thout you! If you die, I'll die too."

"Why, I never said a thing about dying," returned Fel, in surprise.

"Well, you won't never leave me, will you? Say you won't never! Just think of you up in heaven and me down here. I can't bear it!"

"Why, Madge."

"Well, if you should go up to heaven first, Fel, you'd sit there on those steps, with a harp in your hand, and think about me; how I said cross things to you."

"Why, what cross things did ever you say to me, Madge Parlin?"

"There, there," cried I, smiling through my tears, and beginning to dance; "*have* you forgot? O, that's nice! Why, Fel, I called you a lie-girl."

"O, well, I don't care if you did. I wasn't, *was* I?"

"And I called you a borrow-girl, too. And I drowned you, and I — I —"

"I wish you'd stop talking about that," said Fel, "or you'll make me cry; for you're just the nicest girl. And who cares if you do scold sometimes? Why, it's just in fun, and I like to hear you."

Now, Dotty Dimple, I declare to you that this conversation is sweeter to my memory than "a nest of nightingales." Naughty as I was, Fel didn't know I was naughty!

When I went home next morning, the little Louise was much better, and in a few days seemed as well as ever. I was very thankful God knew I was not in earnest, and had not taken me at my word, and called her back to heaven.

She was never quite as cross from that time, and I had many happy hours with her, though, as I told Fel, —

"She's cross *enough* now, and sometimes seems 's if I couldn't forgive her; but I always do; I don't dass not to!"

I was not required to hold her very much, for Fel was not well, and wanted me with her half the time. Mother was always willing I should go, and never said, —

"Don't you think you ought to be pacifying the baby?"

I never dreamed that Fel was really sick. I only knew she grew sweeter every day, and clung to me more and more. I had stopped teasing her long ago, and tried to make her happy. I couldn't have said a cross word to her that winter any more than I could have crushed a white butterfly.

One day I was going to see her, with some jelly in my little basket, when "the Polly woman" walked mournfully into the yard.

"I've just come from Squire Allen's," said she, unfastening her shawl, and sighing three times, — once for every pin.

"And how is Fel?" asked mother.

Polly slowly shook her head, —

"Very low; I —"

Mother looked at her, and then at me; and I looked at her, and then at Polly.

"Dr. Foster says her brain has always been too active, and — "

"Madge, you'd better run along," said mother. "The baby's asleep now; but she'll wake up and want you."

I went with a new thought and a new fear, though I did not know what I thought or what I feared.

When I reached Squire Allen's, Ann Smilie came down the path to meet me.

I asked, "*Is* Fel very low? Polly said so."

And she answered, —

"Why, no, indeed; she is as well as common. Polly is so queer."

I went into the house, and Madam Allen drew me close to her, and said, —

"Bless you, child, for coming here to cheer our little darling."

When she set me down, I saw she had been crying. I had never seen her with red eyes before.

"You and Fel may stay in the warm sitting-room," said she; "and Ann shall carry in some sponge cake and currant shrub, for Fel hardly tasted her dinner."

I remember how Fel clapped her hands, and smiled to see me; and how Ann brought the cake into the sitting-room, and drew up a little table before the fire. We sat and played keep house, and sipped currant shrub out of some silver goblets which had crossed the ocean.

It is a beautiful picture I am seeing now, as I shut my eyes: Fel, with that lovely smile on her face, as if some one were whispering pleasant things in her ear.

"I love you so, and it's so nice;" said I.

Gust came in, and she took his hand and patted it.

"Yes," said she; "I love you and Gust, and it is nice; but we'll have nicer times when we get to heaven, you know."

Gust gave her one little hug, and rushed out of the room. Then I remember throwing myself on the rug and crying; for there was an ache at my heart, though I could not tell why.

Grandpa Harrington came in, and began to poke the fire."

"Well, well," said he; "its hard for one to be taken and the other left, so it is.

But Jesus blessed little children; and I wouldn't cry, my dear."

That was the last time I ever played with Fel. She grew feverish that night, and the doctor said she must not see any one. Something was the matter with her head, and she did not know people. I heard she had "water on the brain," and wondered if they put it on to make it feel cool.

There, children, I do not like to talk about it. It was all over in three short weeks, and then the angels called for Fel. She was "taken" and I was "left," and it seemed "very hard." I grieved for a long while, and wanted to go too; but Madam Allen said, —

"You are all the little girl I have now to take in my arms. Don't you want to stay in this world to make Fel's mother happy?"

"Yes," said I; "I do."

And my own mamma said, —

"The baby needs you, too. See, she has learned to hold her hands to you!"

They all tried to comfort me, and by and by I felt happy again. I am told that the loss of my dear little friend made me a different child. I grew more kind and gentle in my ways, more thoughtful of other people. Not very good, by any means, but trying harder to be good.

Well, I believe this is all I have to tell you of my little days, for very soon I began to be a large girl.

I am leaving off at a sad place, do you say, Prudy? Why, I don't think so. To me it is the most beautiful part of all. Just think of my dear little friend growing up to womanhood in heaven! I ought to be willing to spare her. O, yes!

She was always better than I, and what must she be now? It would frighten me to think of that, only she never knew she was good, and had such a way of not seeing the badness in me.

I shall never forget my darling Fel, and I think she will remember me if I should live to be very old. Yes, I do believe she loves me still, and is waiting for me, and will be very glad to see me when I go to the Summer Land.

Here is a lock of her hair, Fly. You see it is a beautiful golden brown, and as soft as your own. A certain poet says, —

"There seems a love in hair, though it be dead."

And that is why I shall always keep this little tress.

Now kiss me, dears, and we will all go

to the study, and see what uncle Gustus is doing.

Yes, Fly, I did like your uncle Gustus, because he was Fel's brother. Well, — I don't know — yes, dear, — perhaps that *was* part of one little reason why I married him.

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SOPHIE MAY'S "LITTLE-FOLKS" BOOKS.

"The children will not be left without healthful entertainment and kindly instruction so long as SOPHIE MAY (Miss Rebecca S. Clarke) lives and wields her graceful pen in their behalf. Miss CLARKE has made a close and loving study of childhood, and she is almost idolized by the crowd of 'nephews and nieces' who claim her as aunt. Nothing to us can ever be quite so delightfully charming as were the 'Dotty Dimple' and the 'Little Prudy' books to our youthful imagination, but we have no doubt the little folks of to-day will find the story of 'Flaxie Frizzle' and her young friends just as fascinating. There is a sprightliness about all of Miss CLARKE'S books that attracts the young, and their purity, their absolute *cleanliness*, renders them invaluable in the eyes of parents and all who are interested in the welfare of children." — *Morning Star.*

"Genius comes in with 'Little Prudy.' Compared with her, all other book-children are cold creations of literature; she alone is the real thing. All the quaintness of children, its originality, its tenderness and its teasing, its infinite uncommon drollery, the serious earnestness of its fun, the fun of its seriousness, the naturalness of its plays, and the delicious oddity of its progress, all these united for dear Little Prudy to embody them." — *North American Review.*

SOPHIE MAY'S "LITTLE-FOLKS" BOOKS.

LITTLE PRUDY.

"I have been wanting to say a word about a book for children, perfect of its kind—I mean LITTLE PRUDY. It seems to me the greatest book of the season for children. The authoress has a genius for story-telling. Prudy's letter to Mr. 'Gustus Somebody must be genuine; if an invention, it shows a genius akin to that of the great masters. It is a positive kindness to the little ones to remind their parents that there is such a book as LITTLE PRUDY." —*Springfield Republican.*

LITTLE PRUDY'S SISTER SUSIE.

"Every little girl and boy who has made the acquaintance of that funny 'Little Prudy' will be eager to read this book, in which she figures quite as largely as her bigger sister, though the joys and troubles of poor Susie make a very interesting story." —*Portland Transcript.*

"Certainly one of the most cunning, natural, and witty little books we ever read." —*Hartford Press.*

LITTLE PRUDY'S CAPTAIN HORACE.

"These are such as none but SOPHIE MAY can write, and we know not where to look for two more choice and beautiful volumes—SUSIE for girls and HORACE for boys. They are not only amusing and wonderfully entertaining, but teach most effective lessons of patience, kindness, and truthfulness. Our readers will find a good deal in them about Prudy, for so many things are always happening to her that the author finds it impossible to keep her out."

SOPHIE MAY'S "LITTLE-FOLKS" BOOKS.

LITTLE PRUDY'S STORY BOOK.

"This story book is a great favorite with the little folks, for it contains just such stories as they like to hear their aunt and older sister tell; and learn them by heart and tell them over to one another as they set out the best infant tea-set, or piece a baby-quilt, or dress dolls, or roll marbles. A book to put on the book-shelf in the play-room where Susie and Prudy, Captain Horace, Cousin Grace, and all the rest of the 'Little Prudy' folks are kept." — *Vermont Record.*

LITTLE PRUDY'S COUSIN GRACE.

"An exquisite picture of little-girl life at school and at home, and gives an entertaining account of a secret society which originated in the fertile brain of Grace, passed some comical resolutions at first, but was finally converted into a Soldier's Aid Society. Full of life, and fire, and good advice; the latter sugar-coated, of course, to suit the taste of little folks." — *Press.*

LITTLE PRUDY'S DOTTY DIMPLE.

"Dotty Dimplé is the plague of Prudy's life, and yet she loves her dearly. Both are rare articles in juvenile literature, as real as Eva and Topsy of 'Uncle Tom' fame. Witty and wise, full of sport and study, sometimes mixing the two in a confusing way, they run bubbling through many volumes, and make everybody wish they could never grow up or change, they are so bright and cute."

DOTTY DIMPLE AT HER GRANDMOTHER'S.

"SOPHIE MAY'S excellent pen has perhaps never written anything more pleasing to children, especially little girls, than DOTTY DIMPLE. If the little reader who follows Dotty through these dozen chapters, — from her visit to her grandmother to the swing under the trees, — he or she will say: 'It has been a treat to read about Dotty Dimple, she's so cunning.'" — *Herald of Gospel Liberty.*

DOTTY DIMPLE OUT WEST.

"Dotty's trip was jolly. In the cars where she saw so many people that she thought there'd be nobody left in any of the houses, she offers to hold somebody's baby, and when it begins to cry she stuffs pop-corn into its mouth, nearly choking it to death. Afterwards, in pulling a man's hair, she is horrified at seeing his wig come off, and gasps out 'O dear, dear, dear, I did n't know your hair was so tender.' Altogether, she is the cunningist chick that ever lived." — *Oxford Press.*

DOTTY DIMPLE AT HOME

"This little book is as full of spice as any of its predecessors and well sustains the author's reputation as the very cleverest of all writers of this species of children's books. Were there any doubt on this point, the matter might be easily tested by inquiry in half the households in the city, where the book is being revelled over." — *Boston Home Journal.*

DOTTY DIMPLE AT SCHOOL.

"Miss Dotty is a peremptory little body, with a great deal of human nature in her, who wins our hearts by her comic speeches and funny ways. She complains of being *bewitched* by people, and the wind 'blows her out,' and she thinks if her comrade dies in the snow-storm she will be 'dreadfully 'shamed of it,' and has rather a lively time with all her trials in going to school." — *New York Citizen.*

DOTTY DIMPLE AT PLAY.

"'Charming Dotty Dimple' as she is so universally styled, has become decidedly a favorite with young and old, who are alike pleased with her funny sayings and doings. DOTTY AT PLAY will be found very attractive, and the children, especially the girls, will be delighted with her adventures." — *Boston Express.*

DOTTY DIMPLE'S FLYAWAY.

"This is the final volume of the DOTTY DIMPLE SERIES. It relates how little Flyaway provisioned herself with cookies and spectacles and got lost on a little hill while seeking to mount to heaven, and what a precious alarm there was until she was found, and the subsequent joy at her recovery, with lots of quaint speeches and funny incidents." — *North American.*

"A Little Red Riding-Hoodish story, sprightly and takingly told." — *American Farmer.*

LITTLE FOLKS ASTRAY.

"This is a book for the little ones of the nursery or play-room. It introduces all the old favorites of the Prudy and Dotty books with new characters and funny incidents. It is a charming book, wholesome and sweet in every respect, and cannot fail to interest children under twelve years of age." — *Christian Register.*

PRUDY KEEPING HOUSE.

"How she kept it, why she kept it, and what a good time she had playing cook, and washerwoman, and ironer, is told as only SOPHIE MAY can tell stories. All the funny sayings and doings of the queerest and cunningest little woman ever tucked away in the covers of a book will please little folks and grown people alike." — *Press.*

AUNT MADGE'S STORY.

"Tells of a little mite of a girl, who gets into every conceivable kind of scrape and out again with lightning rapidity, through the whole pretty little book. How she nearly drowns her bosom friend, and afterwards saves her by a very remarkable display of little-girl courage. How she gets left by a train of cars, and loses her kitten and finds it again, and is presented with a baby sister 'come down from heaven,' with lots of smart and funny sayings." — *Boston Traveller.*

LITTLE GRANDMOTHER.

"Grandmother Parlen when a little girl is the subject. Of course that was ever so long ago, when there were no lucifer matches, and steel and tinder were used to light fires; when soda and saleratus had never been heard of, but people made their pearl ash by soaking burnt crackers in water; when the dressmaker and the tailor and the shoemaker went from house to house twice a year to make the dresses and coats of the family." — *Transcript.*

LITTLE GRANDFATHER.

"The story of Grandfather Parlen's little boy life, of the days of knee breeches and cocked hats, full of odd incidents, queer and quaint sayings, and the customs of 'ye olden time.' These stories of SOPHIE MAY'S are so charmingly written that older folks may well amuse themselves by reading them. The same warm sympathy with childhood, the earnest naturalness, the novel charm of the preceding volumes will be found in this." — *Christian Messenger.*

MISS THISTLEDOWN.

"One of the queerest of the Prudy family. Read the chapter heads and you will see just how much fun there must be in it: 'Fly's Heart,' 'Taking a Nap,' 'Going to the Fair,' 'The Dimple Dot,' 'The Hole in the Home,' 'The Little Bachelor,' 'Fly's Bluebeard,' 'Playing Mamma,' 'Butter Spots,' 'Polly's Secret,' 'The Snow Man,' 'The Owl and the Humming-Bird,' 'Tales of Hunting Deer,' and 'The Parlen Patchwork.'"

SOPHIE MAY'S "LITTLE FOLKS" BOOKS.

FLAXIE FRIZZLE.

"FLAXIE FRIZZLE is the successor of Dotty Dimple, Little Prudy, Flyaway, and the other charming child creations of that inimitable writer for children, SOPHIE MAY. There never was a healthy, fun-loving child born into this world that, at one stage or another of its growth, wouldn't be entertained with SOPHIE MAY'S books. For that matter, it is not safe for older folks to look into them, unless they intend to read them through. FLAXIE FRIZZLE will be found as bright and pleasant reading as the others." — *Boston Journal.*

FLAXIE'S DOCTOR PAPA.

"SOPHIE MAY understands children. Her books are not books about them merely. She seems to know precisely how they feel, and she sets them before us, living and breathing in her pages. Flaxie Frizzle is a darling, and her sisters, brothers, and cousins are just the sort of little folks with whom careful mothers would like their boys and girls to associate. The story is a bright, breezy, wholesome narrative, and it is full of mirth and gayety, while its moral teaching is excellent." — *Sunday School Times.*

FLAXIE'S LITTLE PITCHERS.

"Little Flaxie will secure a warm place in the hearts of all at once. Here is her little picture. Her name was Mary Gray, but they called her Flaxie Frizzle, because she had light curly hair that frizzled; and she had a curly nose, — that is, her nose curled up at the end a wee bit, just enough to make it look cunning. Her cheeks were rosy red, and she was so fat that when Mr. Snow, the postmaster, saw her, he said, 'How d'ye do, Mother Bunch?'" — *Boston Home Journal.*

SOPHIE MAY'S "LITTLE-FOLKS" BOOKS.

FLAXIE'S TWIN COUSINS.

"Another of those sweet, natural child-stories in which the heroine does and says just such things as actual, live, flesh children do, is the one before us. And what is still better, each incident points a moral. The illustrations are a great addition to the delight of the youthful reader. It is just such beautiful books as this which bring to our minds, in severe contrast, the youth's literature of our early days — the good little boy who died young and the bad little boy who went fishing on Sunday and died in prison, etc., etc., to the end of the threadbare, improbable chapter." — *Rural New Yorker.*

FLAXIE'S KITTYLEEN.

"Kittyleen — one of the Flaxie Frizzle series — is a genuinely helpful as well as delightfully entertaining story. The nine-year-old Flaxie is worried, beloved, and disciplined by a bewitching three-year-old tormenter, whose accomplished mother allows her to prey upon the neighbors. 'Everybody felt the care of Mrs. Garland's children. There were six of them, and their mother was always painting china. She did it beautifully, with graceful vines trailing over it, and golden butterflies ready to alight on sprays of lovely flowers. Sometimes the neighbors thought it would be a fine thing if she would keep her little ones at home rather more; but, if she had done that, she could not have painted china.'" — *Chicago Tribune.*

FLAXIE GROWING UP.

"No more charming stories for the little ones were ever written than those comprised in the three series which have for several years past been from time to time added to juvenile literature by Sophie May. They have received the unqualified praise of many of the most practical scholars of New England for their charming simplicity and purity of sentiment. The delightful story shows the gradual improvement of dear little Flaxie's character under the various disciplines of child-life and the sweet influence of a good and happy home. The illustrations are charming pictures." — *Home Journal.*